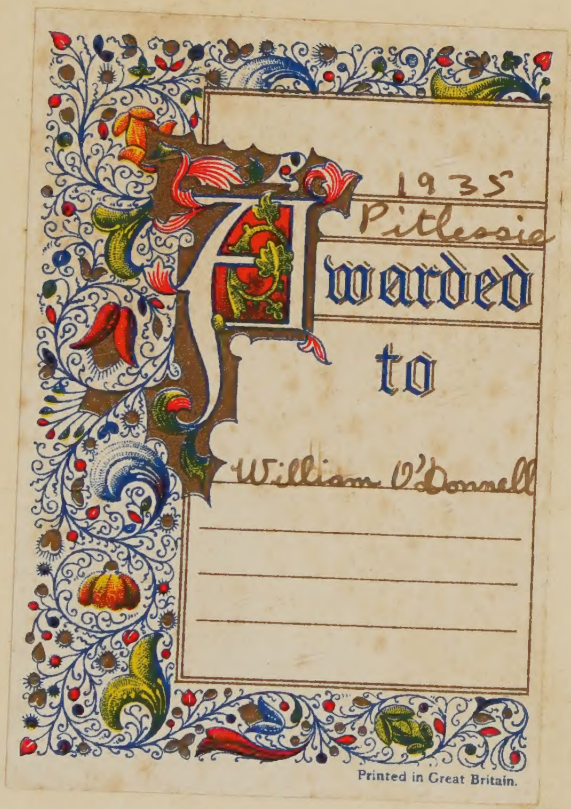
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JOHN PEARCE

NOVELS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE GARDEN OF HEALING

SPLENDID JOY

STEEPS TO THE STARS

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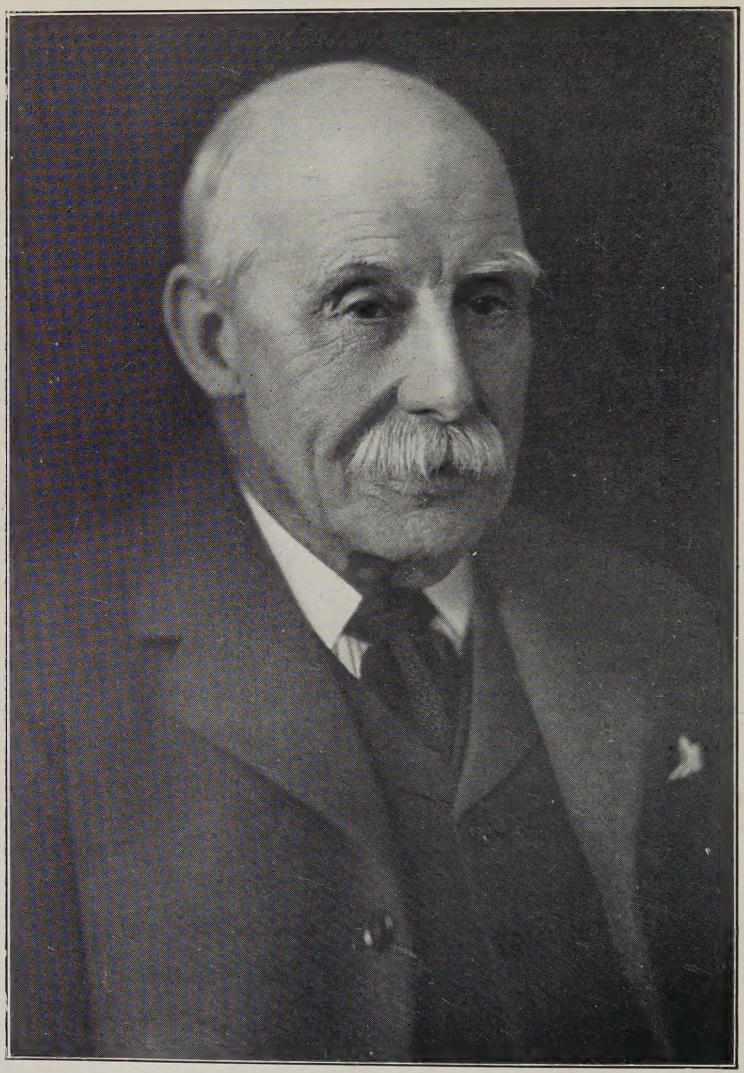

JOHN PEARCE, 1928

JOHN PEARCE

THE MAN WHO PLAYED THE GAME

BY

MARGUERITE WILLIAMS

LONDON
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
MANCHESTER, TORONTO, MADRID, LISBON
AND BUDAPEST

"And when the last Great Scorer comes,
To write against your name,
He'll ask not if you won or lost,
But how you played the game."

GRANTLAND RICE.

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JOHN PEARCE

CHAPTER I

A PROEM

I

It was such a small, low-ceilinged room, just over ten feet square. Eighty years before it had been all that five people knew as "home." The front door opened directly on to a narrow alley; the back door on to the narrowest and shortest of "yards," shut in by a drab brick wall. On the side of the room that was half taken up by the fireplace was a narrow wooden stair that led to the room above.

The man and woman to whom it was home could not afford to rent the whole cottage. They had a child—then two, then three children—to keep. They let the upper room for half-a-crown a week. Theirs was the lodgers' only way to the stairs leading to the room above.

The tall man who had asked admittance looked at the overcrowded ten feet square.

"I was born here," he said quietly.

The woman who had opened her door for him and his friends considered him curiously; the lean man with broad shoulders, and eyes that were still piercing and keen below their overhanging brows, though they had been looking on the world for more than eighty years. He had been born here! The car with which the chauffeur waited just round the corner was such as had seldom visited Ivy Street.

"Would you like to go upstairs?" she suggested obligingly, having no words to express her thoughts on life's queer inequalities.

We climbed the wooden stair against the wall.

"This is where you fixed the string of the crane that you made out of a matchbox," his wife said as she put her hand on the rough stair-head. She had so often seen that cottage before, in imagination.

Standing there beside her I seemed to see, with her, a busy child sitting at the top of the dark stairs, manipulating his matchbox crane until it worked to his satisfaction, then sending his goods up and down with a concentration of interest that was not easily turned aside.

But the room with its unmade bed was stifling. We climbed down again to the room below.

Such a narrow room to have been at once bedroom, birth-chamber, living-room, kitchen, and passage for lodgers—a room too small to live in, yet for a few moments big enough for dreams.

To have been born there——

A few minutes later we left the cottage in Stratford Place and were in Ivy Street once more; Ivy Street, that by-way of Hoxton where no green things are growing. The chauffeur, a little way ahead, started the car towards us.

The bleak November day that had dawned under cloud was brightened by the westering sun. The man who had been born in that narrow cul-de-sac more than eighty years before was standing in the evening light, his keen, gaunt face aglow.

II

In the days of the Tudors the picturesque hamlet of Hoxton in Shoreditch was a favourite resort of wealthy Londoners, who built garden-houses there for their pleasure during the summer months. The hamlet was a manor of St. Paul's,

and in the fourteenth century provided a retreat for the Church as well as the world; for by a sacred well, whose memory was long preserved in the place-names of Holywell Row and Lane, there stood a Benedictine Priory.

When the Priory was demolished noblemen's houses were built on the site—houses with such gardens as could not be found within the City.

By the nineteenth century the gardens had disappeared; the rich had gone away; the once open spaces were crowded; the old houses that remained had been converted into tenement dwellings. Hoxton had become one of the most densely populated parishes of London—"a city of the smaller industries and the lesser ingenuities."

Hoxton Square—the only "Square" left—was a place of dilapidated and dingy buildings; but the tumble-down houses were reported to have been occupied by "highly respectable" people. A network of slums and alleys spread over the once sunny meadows: many of these, in turn, were banished by the oncoming railways. The market of Hoxton was Hoxton Street; it was there, from a miscellany of eatables on barrows and stalls, that the workers or the idle bought most of their meagre provisions.

The beauty of Hoxton was past.

But the country was within walking distance for every able-bodied Londoner; and the tired, who could afford the pence, could reach it by stage or omnibus or by the small steamers that plied up and down the river; and Hoxton children could fish for tiddlers from the Docks, or in Regent's Canal, and proudly fancy themselves on the edge of the great wide sea. The country was near, but beyond the frequented paths it was avoided, for the highwayman was not yet quite out of date.

Eighty years ago Stratford Place—jutting out from Ivy Street—was very much as it is to-day: a short alley, with two-roomed cottages on either side—homes of the very poor. In that narrow cul-de-sac generations of children have played hop-scotch and cherry-stones and tops—with the help of spittle and corks they have made chains of cherry-stones as the children of the country make daisy-chains; they have fought; they have been cuffed and sworn at during the process of growing up into citizens; and there they have formed their first crude conceptions of life.

III

We drove along drab Hoxton Street, but we were looking at it in the light of a day that was

past. We drew up before a once-gorgeous theatre. The man of eighty-odd was living his boyhood again.

"That's the place I delighted in—the Britannia Theatre. It's a picture palace now." He looked at the drab old building affectionately. It had given him so many thrilling hours of delight—when pantomime and melodrama afforded his only glimpse into a world where people dined sumptuously and dressed richly; where right always triumphed and villains were unmasked. He had no acquaintance with theatres of the first rank—the Britannia was his Paradise. He spoke of the original manager, whose reputation reached him, though he died when the small lover of melodrama was only a boy.

"Lane was a decent man. His wife was the idol of Hoxton. She came to the theatre as a dancing-girl, and Lane fell in love with her and married her. . . . She came up from poverty. Her father was a cabman. He drove one of those four-wheeled cabs. He had a wooden leg, and used to rest it on the dashboard. When I was a kid I thought it so funny.

"When Mrs. Sara Lane appeared on the stage all the women were thrilled," he said reminiscently, re-living for a moment the exciting hours with

audiences that expressed their feelings without reserve. "She wasn't a recognized Christian," he explained, "but she was the embodiment of Christianity. She was wonderful in many forms of goodness. She had a human heart. . . . Whenever I could get the money I had a threepenny seat in the gods.

"I don't go to the theatre now, but when I see that *Sweeney Todd the Barber*, or *Maria Marten, or the Murder in the Red Barn*, is to be played at the Elephant, I always get a thrill."

Later he confessed, with a humorous smile wrinkling his face: "If I were in the States and 'Sweeney' was on, I think I'd go. I might feel that the house was going to be blown up—but I'd risk it."

Eighty years before the Britannia was one of the largest theatres in London, and it maintained its own company. The actors and actresses were regarded by the theatre-goers of Hoxton as personal friends. Their domestic histories were freely discussed, as well as their salaries, their difficulties, and their appearance on the stage. One of the actors kept a small tobacco-shop to supplement his income. The stage-struck child used to hang round the door of the shop, hoping to get a glimpse of the wonderful person within.

"Every play had a tragedy—and a villain. Cecil Pitt was the villain. . . . If I could draw, I could draw Mrs. Lane and Cecil Pitt now."

He was still looking at the old theatre. The men lounging in the street stared, wondering who or what had come their way.

"You can go on," he said to the chauffeur, almost reluctantly.

We crossed Old Street, drove along Curtain Road—a broad, busy thoroughfare—into High Street (eighty years before, a medley of costers' stalls and barrows), and so to Bishopsgate and the City.

To the historian the chief claim of Shoreditch to notice is that it could boast the first theatres that ever were built in London, and—greater glory than the buildings—the greatest of dramatists himself played in one of them—the Curtain—the theatre built on part of the site of the old Priory. *Romeo and Juliet* was originally produced at the Curtain, and, at Shakespeare's request, Ben Jonson's play, *Every Man in His Own Humour*.

But the small boy from Ivy Street knew nothing of Shakespeare or the glory that was Hoxton's. His thoughts were of Britannia, the Great Theatre, and the days when its plays were so real that the

heroine in danger was often warned by shouts from the audience.

"There was a Mr. Mackney and his wife who always took the *superior* parts," he explained. "If there was a scene with a mansion in it they were sure to be there. I remember one scene where Mrs. Mackney—a Great Lady—ordered her butler to take a blanket to a beggar at the gate. I think the idea of the play was founded on Dives and Lazarus. The butler was very dramatic. He tore the blanket in two, and handed one half to the Great Lady, saying, 'That's against the time you will want it yourself!'

"That brought the house down."

We were held up by the traffic. He looked out to find a big building at the corner of the street.

"You see that bank? When I was a youngster I used to pass it every day with my brother's dinner. He was working near here." He looked up proudly as he added: "And not long ago I walked out through those doors, having had the offer of a loan of £100,000.

"The bank manager didn't know me as the lad who once used to carry a labourer's dinner in a basin and a red cotton handkerchief with white spots. . . .

"Which way is the man taking us? Over

Southwark Bridge. This was a toll-bridge when I was a lad. It belonged to a private company. They levied tolls to pay for the building of it. It was a penny for foot-passengers. Drover-sheep had to be counted and paid for. There are only two other bridges standing now that were standing when I was a child—London and Waterloo. I watched Blackfriars and Westminster and Lambeth being built."

He looked out at the misty river.

"There was no embankment then. Boats came right up to the Customs. . . . You know those arches by Adelphi? Boats used to go right through the arches to Somerset House—up to a lock. The Adelphi Arches were a great haunt of the shoeblacks and crossing-sweepers and the children of the streets. Quentin Hogg—his statue is in Langham Place—used to get those boys together; he kept them from the thieves' kitchens; he taught them. He did a big work for them."

His own work had been so different; yet there was in the boy born in Hoxton, where education was of little account, something akin to the lad trained at Eton who sat under the Adelphi Arches—then open to the tide and the street—with two ragged crossing-sweepers, teaching them to read by the light of a tallow candle stuck in an

empty beer-bottle, and a couple of Bibles for text-books.

One boy of necessity earned pence by doing odd jobs; the other that he might know what life meant to the necessitous. Both, as men, kept a great sympathy for hungry, unwashed boys.

By way of Union Street we reached Blackfriars Road. He peered out of the window, then pointed towards Friar Street.

"See down that street? I used to sit at the foot of a bank there and eat my Sunday's dinner more than sixty years ago.

"They were building the Chatham and Dover Railway, and there were banks of sand and gravel there. I used to stay until it was time for afternoon service at the Mission."

During his childhood he had been "always hungry." As a young wage-earner whose love had been transferred from the theatre to the chapel he could relish that Sunday's meal by the side of the rough railway embankment, while he lived for the time of the next service.

Many boys—richer than he by birth and education—have been one with him in the experience of hunger. Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and their fellow-scholars in the old school of Christ's Hospital, wrote bitterly of the hard life

and the bad food of their schooldays. But the lad who relished his Sunday's dinner on the railway embankment was never sorry for himself. "When I could get a good meal—the joy!"

Because he had been "always hungry" food assumed a tremendously important place in his mind. Because of his early experiences the hungry always claimed his sympathy; and because with his sympathy he possessed a practical mind and a dogged determination John Pearce became, while he was still a young man, the pioneer caterer for the working man—for whom none had catered liberally before.

CHAPTER II

SIMPLY BOY

I

JOHN PEARCE has no proud family history. "I've been myself and not troubled about my ancestry," he said; but he holds the memory of his mother in reverence.

His father came as a young man to London, probably from Cornwall, and lost whatever individuality he had possessed in the crowd. He was a hatter by trade, but while his children were still very young, illness put him out of work and the mother became the wage-earner. The boys remembered their father as a straight and honourable man, but not a kind one. He did not seem essential to their world. Their mother moulded them; hers was the biggest influence in their lives.

She was a strongly independent Welsh woman, by nature and early training religious, but—as her son in after years remembered—"with her poor life much of her faith was awfully shaken.

She kept the fundamentals of Christianity, and she used to instil them into her boys."

One of the earliest pictures of the small home off Ivy Street is of three boys lying together on a rough bed of straw, stuffed into a coarse tick placed over chairs; a sick man on a bed in another corner of the room; and, between, a tall bent woman working by the light of a penny dip, stitching tops of boots—for less than a shilling a day.

Eighty years ago Hoxton was the home of the very poor—the rough, industrious poor, not the criminal, although Charles Booth's investigations, made rather more than forty years later, discovered it to be "the leading criminal quarter of London, and, indeed, of England."

"I'd have been a Communist if I'd lived in Ivy Street without my mother," said the man who had left it far behind. "I'm not a politician, but I know you can't make citizens with bad houses and high rents."

There was little choice of districts for such as Mrs. Pearce; they had to live where they could get work. But the woman who had come up from Wales never settled down in Hoxton—never settled in the more criminal district to which necessity later drove her. Self-respecting and self-

reliant, she never became intimate with her neighbours; working alone, she never accepted defeat.

She lived before the days of Welfare Centres; before there was medical care for the children of the poor; before there was compulsory education or any dream of free meals for the hungry. She fought her way through poverty, and brought up her children, alone. In Hoxton she was almost an aristocrat.

Three boys were born to her in that small damp room in Stratford Place. On the morning when the third came into the world three-year-old Johnny was sent to the general shop round the corner with a penny to buy a bloater.

A small shop?—A great and mysterious and wondrous-smelling shop to the small boy in the holland pinafore who ventured inside with his penny.

The chandler emerged from the dark back parlour.

"Well, Squire, what's for you?" he asked his shy customer jocularly.

Johnny felt himself grow taller in a moment.

"What does 'Squire' mean?" he demanded, as soon as he could attract his mother's attention. He did not quite understand her definition, but thenceforth "Squire" was a title of dignity to which he must one day attain.

Not long after the birth of the third child they moved to a house nearby. They still had only one room, but it was private—not a passage-room, as the first was. The two rooms of the house were —bungalow fashion—one on either side of the front door. The children grew into boyhood before the Art of Making Boys had aroused the interest of men, or Boys' Brigades had captured the imagination of the urchin whose playground was the streets.

Henry Drummond had not yet introduced the Boy to the world that did not know him; that introduction was to be later. "It is only his being in town and his mispronunciation that make you think he is not a savage. . . . He is not good. He is not bad. He has no soul. He has not even soap. He is simply Boy—pure, unwashed, unregenerate Boy."

John Pearce was a boy of the streets, though a lover of soap and water. He was not bad. He would have liked to be, but he did not like the consequences. He had no lofty scorn for the birch rod that always hung by the fireplace, and even less than the rod did he like his mother's sorrow and her serious talks with a rebellious boy at bedtime.

His elder brother Joseph was harder; he was

"a bit wild" and "a highwayman at heart." He used to tell such "scary stories" that his listening brothers were afraid to move. The children entertained each other while they were very young —sometimes with gunpowder and light and fire-arms. For several nights two of them went to sleep with a loaded pistol between them—very proud of their daring.

Their mother was very strict about "keeping the Sabbath." Johnny often wanted to break it, but he was never very successful, because his conscience hurt him when he hurt his mother. Once when he took risks he was badly found out.

"Let's go tiddlin'," Joseph suggested one Sunday morning.

"Let's," agreed Johnny.

They stole off together, with the buckram crown of their mother's old bonnet and some pieces of string, to fish for tadpoles in Regent's Canal. Whenever they had fished they found their tiddlers dead by the morning, but that did not make the sport less exciting. They climbed over the barges down on to the towing-path by the Canal. Then Johnny fell in. There were no tiddlers that day. The small fisherman sat shivering in a brick-field while his brother tried to dry his clothes.

They were found out.

II

The child had his first glimpse of a world less poor than the one he knew after he had been accidentally poisoned by a dose of lotion given in the place of medicine, and he was taken to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He had such a large room to sleep in—with such big fires! Everything was so bright and cheery! It was a lovely place. For eight weeks he lived in luxury. He treasured up the memory of it when he returned to the tiny room that was home, where were his matchbox crane and his halfpenny carts, and the alley where he played hop-scotch, and small ragged girls nursed strange home-made dolls of straw.

Johnny began to trade early, but the financial results of his first enterprise did not show a profit. He bought a farthing's worth of liquorice, broke it into small pieces and put it into a medicine-bottle of water. This tasty concoction had to be shaken until it was a good colour and frothy on the top, and then sold—

> Two teaspoonfuls a pin
> And a little drop in.
> Spanish liquorice water.

When the bottle was empty the trader sold the

pins he had acquired to his mother for a farthing, and with the farthing bought more liquorice.

Those were the days of the Crimean War. Hoxton knew nothing of the Crimea. It hardly knew that there was war, but it did suffer the consequences. Bread was a shilling a loaf; sugar tenpence a pound. The boys were sent two at a time for bread, so that one should prevent the other from eating the "overweight" on the way home. The price of meat was prohibitive; even the "scraps" that were to be bought on Saturday nights cost as much as the "best cuts" of pre-war days. John and his brothers did not know—except in imagination—what a good meal was. They were brought up on bread and dripping and bread alone—known as "one with and one without." Naturally the hungry growing boys thought more about food than about battles.

John was never a book-lover, but he was always observant of life. People and their doings interested him. The milkman, the dyer, the shopkeeper started alluring speculations, and there was inexhaustible interest around the stalls that crowded the busier streets.

One of the chief diversions of Hoxton was the Prize Ring, where the men fought with their naked fists. The child who could not get in to

see the "dreadful sight" knew the names of the champions, and followed them along the street in awed admiration. If the East End prize-fighter did well he usually took a public-house with his profits, and there on the wall he displayed the belt that he had won as an attraction to visitors. The small boy, who was not allowed to go inside, used to peep through the door to get a glimpse of the wonderful trophy that was kept by Jim Mace the prize-fighter, at the time when Tom Sayer s was the great champion.

The public-house offered a number of attractions in addition to its lawful trade. Until the newspaper tax was abolished in 1855, the publicans, in such districts as Hoxton, were the chief purveyors of the daily paper, whose purchase was beyond the means of the average man. Every paper had to be stamped. There was a duty on paper of thirty shillings a ton and of three-and-six on every advertisement. If a publican wished to be popular he bought about a dozen papers. For the price of a drink a man might have one to read that was perhaps three days old.

John never saw a newspaper.

His school education—spread over a period of about three years—may have covered six months in all. He hated school, and was only too glad

when his mother could not find the fourpence required for his week's attendance there. He preferred to master the meaning of letters in his own way, and hoardings and shops taught him more of their mysteries than ever he learned in school. He had his chief education out of doors.

Even his possible schooldays were broken into by odd jobs. If he had a chance to earn a penny he took it, and pennies were valued in Ivy Street. He had made friends with the sexton of Hoxton Church, and added to the income of the home by weeding the paths or sweeping up the leaves. Sometimes the small boy was bell-ringer, sometimes organ-blower; occasionally he was even assistant grave-digger.

Mrs. Pearce herself could read and write, but she had little time or inclination to do either. All her energy was absorbed by the task of providing sufficient bread and dripping for three growing boys and keeping them decently covered and safe from the horrors of the workhouse.

When he was nine, her second son's casual, intermittent schooldays came to an end, and he was launched into the world of Hoxton as a regular wage-earner.

CHAPTER III

A BREAD-WINNER

I

THAT was the proudest and happiest day in the boy's life when he was finally freed from the tyranny of school and established in his small world as a wage-earner and bread-winner.

Now that he no longer had the fear of school in his mind, knowledge became attractive. He continued his education in heterodox ways that were more successful than the ways in which others had tried to drive him. But play-time was over. Life had become—work and bed.

His first job was with a picture-frame moulder and gilder, who employed a number of men, chiefly Germans. The nine-year-old boy worked thirteen hours a day, and fifteen on Saturdays, for half-a-crown a week, supplementing his wages with odd pence earned by running errands for the workmen, who were handicapped in shopping by their slight knowledge of English.

It was a rough life. Blows and hard words were

common. His earnings did not go far to improve the conditions at home, and his diet remained "one with and one without," with an occasional addition of treacle or some scraps of meat on Sundays. In spite of the conditions he was a proud boy, for was he not now much more than a boy? His mother had trained him to a love of cleanliness, and he went to his work on Monday morning with a clean apron; but if at the end of the day it was still clean—in too large a measure for his pride—he carefully splashed it with whitewash so that the boys he met on his way home should know that he was really a working man.

For eighteen months he stayed at the picture-framer's—all the time on the look out for a chance to "better himself." He stayed until he had bought a complete suit of odd clothes in Whitechapel—coat, trousers, waistcoat, and shirt for one-and-tenpence, and a pair of socks for a penny. When he became errand-boy to a greengrocer for four shillings a week, with his "tea on Saturdays," he thought that his fortune was made. Carrying big baskets of greenstuff around, he learned to know Hoxton well. He knew no place beyond. He had never seen the City of London or the country outside.

In spite of his increase of fortune he found the

problem of boots almost insoluble. He spent many days tramping about streets that were three inches in mud, and he never possessed a new pair of boots. He learned to know the stalls where second- and third-hand clothes were to be bought, but the second- or third-hand boots were never weather-proof. Every night he washed the thick mud from his stockings and hung the stockings over the door of the oven to be ready for the morning. Years afterwards, when he told his sons some of the problems of his own boyhood, they comforted him with the reminder: "Ah, Father, things are better with you since you've lived with us."

Those were the days when food meant nearly everything to him—he was growing fast and was always hungry—so when he had the chance of a job that, though it offered him no more money, promised an occasional meal at the master's expense, he took it.

He was errand-boy to a linen-draper for a little while, until he further discovered a place where he saw the promise of enough to eat for the first time in his life.

This alluring place was a builder's. In the builder's yard he learned many things—about materials, repairing, and building—that were

JOHN PEARCE, 1862

to prove very useful to him later. But he found himself among a set of rough, coarse, drinking men and with a master whom he remembered as a "bad man in every way." The boy found some compensation in the kindness of the builder's wife, who gave him indoor work to do away from the men and fed him generously.

Unfortunately he disappointed her. One day he came to her drunk. She did not try to find any excuse for him. He had failed her. Drunk at thirteen!

In those days it was the custom to pay wages on Saturday nights at the neighbouring public-house. The public-house seemed to many a necessary accompaniment of every transaction. John, sent by his mistress for some change, found himself in the midst of a crowd of half-tipsy men who thought it a joke to get him to take a "noggin o' gin." It was the first time he ever tasted gin—and the last. But it ruined his reputation with the builder's wife.

A little later he found himself out of work. His mother was now a widow. He could not live on her. His youthful independence said: Work—or starve. He spent a miserable workless three weeks, and found at the end of it "a paradise of food"—a pastrycook's shop.

He was still only an errand-boy, but, with a

diligence that he never exercised at school, he picked up odds and ends of practical experience, and at the end of two years he had a very good idea of the way to run a cook-shop. From the shop, too, he had additional wealth to take home, for dripping, of which there was no lack, was considered a perquisite.

After two years—which were far from being happy ones—he came to his last local job, still in the region of food-stuffs, in the shop of a Hoxton provision merchant. His hours were seven to ten, except Saturdays, when the shop was open till twelve. He had half a day's holiday at Christmas and half on Good Friday. He was better off than many of his companions, who had to work half a day on Sunday. His Sundays were free.

His life was still chiefly work and bed. Until he began to go to church, Sundays dragged. He was too tired to enjoy them.

To him this job seemed an advance on any job he had had before, because he felt that he was working for "Christian people." It was a new experience. Greaves was a hard master, but honourable. His wife's was "a very good influence."

It seemed natural to John that his mother should be a good woman and should care that her lads kept straight, but it was a new idea to him that

any other woman should care, and should talk to him as his mother talked, and should be even more particular than she about "keeping the Sabbath." Mrs. Greaves was a Wesleyan, and she not only persuaded the lad to attend John Wesley's old chapel in City Road—the mother-church of Methodism—but she liked to see that he went there trim and tidy.

Photography was one of the innovations of the nineteenth century, and a day that was a red-letter day in the life of the fifteen-year-old errand-boy was the one on which he had his first photograph taken.

He was then earning about seven shillings a week, but clothes were still a difficulty. In that photograph—well preserved in its dark case for nearly seventy years—he appears immaculate. The coat you may see there once belonged to the provision merchant, his master. It was a brown one, "awfully greasy," but a Hoxton tailor had turned and cleaned and altered it to fit—with allowance for growing—for seven shillings. John searched the stalls of Petticoat Lane and found a cap for sixpence-ha'penny. Mrs. Greaves provided him with a pair of speckly trousers of her husband's and a shirt and collar belonging to her son, who was a grown man.

Dressed in these spacious garments, very clean and self-conscious, John arrived at the photographer's. When he received the photo, on glass, with a narrow gilt frame, he was so delighted with it that he added a second sixpence and secured a dark case, plush lined, with the picture, for a shilling. His mother was as proud of it as he was.

After four years with Greaves the lad grew restless and wanted to move on. He threw up his job, never doubting his ability to find another just round the corner. He found instead—a blank. He was out of work and no job waited for him.

For six weeks he wandered about, from the City to the Strand, trying to find someone who would employ him. He had very little money and very little food. More than once hunger nearly drove him to take the Queen's Shilling. The recruiting-sergeants, in full regimentals, with red, white and blue streamers flying from a bow in their caps, were very active in Trafalgar Square. More than one tried to enlist the lad of eighteen, who attracted their attention by his six-foot-three.

"One day," he said, "I'd been along the Strand looking for work. Then I looked at the fountains

for my dinner. That was all the dinner I had. A sergeant came up to me and said: 'Well, young man, will you join Her Majesty's Army?'

"I was undecided. The sergeant would have taken me to a public-house to have a drink and receive the Queen's Shilling. I didn't like public-houses. I said I'd think about it, and turned away and walked up to Covent Garden. There I found the job I'd been looking for—my last job before I became my own master."

Later, looking back to those years between nine and eighteen, he saw "a most extraordinary haphazard course. I couldn't be out of work, so I had to go to anyone who'd have me." But he saw, controlling that seeming "haphazard course," a Providence that had led him every step of the way. Years afterwards John Pearce, then a wealthy man, said: "I would like to emphasize the advantages I gained through being a poor boy. The struggle I had in those early days is one of the greatest blessings God has bestowed on me. Force of necessity has brought out whatever of good I have developed, that was implanted by my mother."

A learned committee sitting to decide the best programme of study for would-be caterers could hardly have produced a more practical one than

John Pearce carried out haphazard, before he had a glimpse of his goal.

He gained a practical working knowledge of building materials and tools and the art of repairing, if not of making. He learned how to decorate and to make shops attractive. He learned how to make bread and pastry and the principles and practice of a cook-shop. He acquired a useful knowledge of vegetables and meats and groceries. He visited the markets and learned the art of buying and selling. He learned also much about men—whom to trust and how to deal with the untrustworthy. He learned how to take care of himself without ever being guilty of the sin of self-pity.

II

During his boyhood John Pearce knew nothing of games, nothing of athletics, nothing of the healthy rivalries of clean sport. Sometimes his life seemed to be made up of work and bed; at other times, more fortunate, it was brightened by recreation.

His three chief pleasures were walks, the theatre, and hangings.

The boy, strangely, would go far to see sights that as a man he would have gone miles to avoid.

One of the gruesome excitements of those days was the public hangings. A space was railed off in the open street outside Newgate Jail, and there on a platform about five feet high the gallows was wheeled. The windows of the houses opposite the prison were let for high prices to finely dressed "ladies and gentlemen," many of whom would be in their places the night before, while those who could not afford a window lined up in the street below, as enthusiasts will do for a play. The public-houses were open all night. Trade was brisk.

In the eighteenth century a criminal condemned became a hero. Men and women crowded to visit him in his cell. After the Old Bailey prison was burned down in the riots of 1780 such visiting went out of fashion, but, until public executions were abolished in 1868, its place was taken by a rage to see criminals hanged.

Human nature at its ugliest was seen in those blasphemous brutal mobs. On a special occasion, early in the century, the number of people who "assisted" at an execution was estimated at forty thousand. Many were killed or injured in the crush that morning.

When the young caterer-to-be was busy learning his way about Newgate Market, he was often

close to the jail at the time of an execution. The gallows had a fearful fascination for him. He saw it whenever he had the chance. Once, after witnessing an execution at Newgate at eight o'clock, he hurried over the river to the Surrey side, where at nine o'clock he saw another man hanged, on the top of Newington Jail, in Horsemonger Lane.

More natural was his love of the theatre, though he knew it only in one of its cruder forms. The actress who won and kept his loyal admiration was Mrs. Sara Lane, the "Queen of Hoxton." Her influence over the men and women of the neighbourhood was remarkable. It was said of her that she could go alone where policemen had to go in couples. She kept the life of her theatre clean. Britannia, the Great Theatre, was the second Britannia. The first was only a small theatre and was called a "Sing-song." Volunteers from the audience sang. There was a chairman to keep order and conduct the concert. There was no charge for admission, but everyone was expected to drink of the beer that was sold freely. John Pearce knew the first and second Britannias. The third he never visited.

At the "Old Brit," boys who could find threepence could enjoy crude romance and blood-

curdling melodramas, and—if they could not share the feast—could watch the consumption of enormous piles of sandwiches and pork pies by the more prosperous members of the audience.

Often when threepence was unprocurable a small boy would stand for hours watching for a glimpse of Bonnie Black Bess, who must go through the door to the stage when her master, Dick Turpin, was billed to ride to York; or he would stand patiently peering through cracks for a sight of the hero-villain who was so enthralling.

Often for the growing errand-boy it was a choice between a meal and the "Old Brit"; but important as food was to him, there seemed something even more worth while as he watched the men and women crowding towards the way to light and absorbing enchantment in the "strong" melodramas, of which the modern revivals are amusing travesties.

His mother disapproved of the theatre; so did Mrs. Greaves. But what did they know of the lure of the world behind those doors that would open to him for the price of a helping of pudding! In the company of *Maria Marten* or *Sweeney Todd* he would forget that he was hungry and that his boots were always old.

The most wholesome of his recreations, indulged

at very rare intervals as a recreation, was walking. If he wanted to go anywhere in those days he had to walk; there was no other way—except by careful saving.

Epping Forest was nearer than it is now, though the line had not been laid to Chingford. Sometimes on Sundays he and his brother would walk to the Eagle at Snaresbrook.

"That was about the limit we could trudge. Holiday times, if we could get sixpence, we'd ride to Tottenham on the Eastern Counties Railway and walk the rest of the way to the Forest. That railway was a rare primitive affair—all open carriages. You understand, we couldn't get sixpence until after we began to work. There were no sixpences in Stratford Place!"

During his childhood he never went beyond the boundaries of Hoxton; he never saw a green field or a hedgerow. He never had a week's holiday till he had turned forty. He was fifty when he first visited Switzerland. On Lake Lucerne, in the presence of the great white mountains, he knew that wonder that Carlyle says is the soul of all religion.

"I didn't want anyone to speak to me," confessed the man who had kept his soul sensitive for the beauty that came to him late.

CHAPTER IV

BURNING HIS BOATS

I

When he was eighteen John Pearce became a porter to a herbalist in Covent Garden.

Herbalist—Covent Garden. The words call up to the imagination the old Convent Garden of the Abbot of Westminster, as it was less than four hundred years ago.

A tree-shaded garden threaded by a clear, sparkling stream. A garden of brooks and vineyard. A garden where the bird-music in the sunshine mingled with the chanting of the monks in the chapel. A garden from which for a moment there seems to drift down the years a faint clean perfume of herbs of healing.

Even after it was, in part, laid out as a square by Inigo Jones, Covent Garden was still in harmony with the woodland and meadowland that, beyond the wall, stretched away north to Hampstead.

To the newly laid-out square the country-folk

from Oxford Road and the little village of Charing used to bring their garden produce for sale. As large houses were erected around the square, not only did the market increase, but Covent Garden became the most fashionable centre of London. It was a place where beauty was paraded, where wit and romance found play; a place, even, where duels were fought "in the good old days" of the eighteenth century.

But this was not Covent Garden as John Pearce knew it. In the cellar of the herbalist he was conscious chiefly of the herb-dust that made him so hungry. Unpacking cases of horehound, wormwood, and camomile, he was very far from the Abbot's Convent Garden, where fragrant things grew in sun and shade for healing and for beauty.

For fifteen months he stayed with the herbalist, and, as he said afterwards, he wouldn't have had a bad time if it hadn't been for his religion. Just before going to Covent Garden he had had a new and wonderful experience. He did not talk about it, but the men discovered that he was "religious." Most of them hated religion.

He found himself in the midst of "awful persecution. . . .The vile things said to you made you creep. . . . I used to get pelted. But I was

young—I could stand it. . . . From Saturday night to Monday morning was heaven on earth."

He earned £1 a week as porter, but the money did not go very far. He was proud to be able to take small presents of groceries home to his mother, but at the end of the week he had nothing left. Two shillings out of the twenty were dedicated, the other eighteen slipped away like water, leaving him often unsatisfied.

It was while he was at Covent Garden that he experienced the first rich thrill of giving. His elder brother had married, and in those days a daughter was born to him. The young uncle went alone to choose a present for the baby. It was his first experience of the luxury of the greater blessedness.

How proud he was—and how particular. He knew the article and the quality and the colour that he wanted. A pair of ankle-strap shoes of very soft leather and a light Cambridge blue. "Those shoes made me know the joy of giving. . . . I felt as if I might have been giving a diamond ring."

Sixty-two years later John Pearce was visiting his niece during an illness.

"What about those little shoes?" he asked, as they journeyed back into the past together.

"Oh, uncle, I've got 'em now!" said the old lady proudly.

Those little blue ankle-strap shoes!

His fifteen months with the herbalist were months with very little leisure. Three mornings a week he had to be at the market at five o'clock, on the other mornings at eight, and his work was never finished until eight at night. But, he said, except for the continuous persecution, and the unclean language that he was forced to hear every day, his "lot was no harder than anyone else's."

When he left Covent Garden he broke entirely free from his rough antagonists. Only once, many years later, did he meet one of them—the bitterest of them all—when their ways had grown far apart.

The one-time porter had then many shops under his control and used to visit them in the early morning—driving from one to the other in his brougham. One day as he was about to step into the carriage that waited outside his shop in Bow Street, a gruff voice reached him through the mist of the dawn.

"Mornin', John."

He could not distinguish the figure, but he recognized the voice at once. It took him back

to the days at Covent Garden and the man who was most bitter to him there.

His response was quick.

"Is that you, Bill?" Then—"What are you doing now?"

"In an' out o' prison," was the answer.

Mr. Pearce put his hand into his pocket. His one-time enemy accepted the coins he proffered, then vanished into the gloom out of which he had come.

II

As the months passed the tall young porter felt a growing desire to become his own master. He had picked up many odds and ends of experience, but he seemed very little higher on the ladder of success than when he carried heavy baskets of greengrocery or of bread round the streets of Hoxton.

He had no leisure or inclination for books; he had had no ambition for self-culture; but he went to and from his work with open eyes, with a sympathetic appreciation of homely needs, and with a quiet saving humour that kept him from imagining himself an ill-treated victim of fate. He was a lad of ideas, and he was not afraid

to look at them when they happened to be original.

To many young Britishers there comes a vision of vast open spaces across the seas; of lands waiting to be tilled and sown; of work with a promise of rich rewards.

John Pearce never looked so far away. He stood at the foot of Holborn Hill and saw his Land of Promise. All that he needed was within the City of London for him. He determined to make it his own.

In those days there were no travelling facilities for workers. Every man had to walk to his work—many of them three miles to a twelve-hour day, with another three miles to be tramped at the end of it. Each morning the lad left Hoxton for Covent Garden carrying his food for the day in a red spotted handkerchief. As he walked he noticed other men—all carrying their rough bundles with their day's food; many of them hungry as he was hungry; all of them tired before the day's work was finished. Every public-house that they passed had a card in the window advertising "Rum and milk." The men who could afford it went in for a glass on their way to work.

Food began to assume a new importance in the

mind of the young man, who was well acquainted with hunger. He considered it in relation to the thousands of his fellow-workers and their need, as his own feelings translated that need to him.

About one-fourth of the London shops were for the sale of food or drink, but there were no clean cheap restaurants such as are so plentiful now. There were cook-shops, where a man might take his own chop and cook it, with others, for a ha'penny. There were dining-rooms, which were taverns where one could dine at narrow tables, seated in narrow, high-backed pews, while dirty waiters in greasy clothes moved clumsily about the sanded floor serving the food in rough style, and the street outside the window was hidden from view by the steam from the joint of boiled beef.

Public-houses provided no food, but the man who did not want to eat the meal that he had brought from home in the street might rest there on an up-ended barrel—spreading out his food on the spotted handkerchief by his side—for the price of a drink.

The only other possible place for the working man was the coffee-house, which was always dirty and never free from the odour of bloaters.

The coffee-house was generally down a back street. About two feet behind the window was an ochre curtain of net, probably torn; and in front of the curtain something dusty and withered that might once have professed to be a palm. On a plate on one side of the might-have-been lay a shrivelled bloater, and on a plate on the other side two or three fly-blown rashers of bacon. Inside the shop were dirty tables without cloths, and the smell of bloaters—bloaters—bloaters.

The coffee-houses were not inviting.

There were no fruit-shops. Before the wealthy days of colonial produce, fruit was a luxury.

There were a few stalls in the streets, but the refreshments offered there were even less appetizing than in the coffee-houses, and the old women who kept them even dirtier than the coffee-house keepers.

John Pearce had known only a tiny home and a very poor one, but in a wonderful way it had been always clean. He could not eat his food in a bloaterous coffee-house.

Then he reasoned—if clean, cheap food would be such a boon to him, would it be less to other men? He stood at the foot of Holborn Hill watching the hundreds tramping to their work

with their lumpy red bundles, and he resolved to do a daring thing.

With one week's money, his only wealth, he gave up his job at Covent Garden, determined to become the caterer for the London working man.

CHAPTER V

THE GUTTER HOTEL

THE working man's caterer-to-be started in a modest way. With only a pound in the world he could not do very great things. He began by hiring a barrow for a shilling a week.

Every morning for fifteen months he had passed up Holborn Hill on his way to work. Every evening he had passed down it, often half-asleep and always hungry. A cup of hot coffee would have been so welcome. He had never been able to get it; but now he would provide it for others. Holborn Hill should be his pitch.

The Viaduct was not then built. On the site where, later, the City Temple would stand, and crowds come from far to hear Dr. Joseph Parker, there was a public-house. It was outside that public-house that the young caterer had visioned his pitch. But although he supplemented his courteous request to the publican by a market bunch of flowers for the publican's wife, he was unsuccessful, for the police ordered him off the

highway into a backwater past which the busy main stream of workers went every morning unnoticing.

He could make so little show with his small capital. His barrow was only a poor affair; but he determined to have everything clean. "Everything new, everything clean," was his very original motto. He bought an urn with a brass tap—which he polished and repolished—and half a dozen cups and saucers.

The young man starting with a coster's barrow and six cups and saucers could not imagine that a time would come when the breakages of crockery in his establishments would cost over £2,000 a year.

He took his stand in the early morning at the corner of East Road, City Road, ready to supply workers with a cup of hot coffee and a one-inch "doorstep" of new bread with butter or marmalade for a penny.

But although he had thought that he was going to supply a need, no one seemed to want him. For six months his takings averaged only two-and-six a morning. He lived on the food that he did not sell. His business sense was developing. He soon discovered that to hire a barrow for a shilling a week was an unnecessary extravagance. It was

much cheaper to buy wheels and an American ham-box and make his own. This he painted a bright red, and felt that his goods looked a little more attractive. But the want of capital crippled him.

While he was still taking only half-a-crown a morning he was offered ten shillings a week as packer in a warehouse for six hours a day. He gladly took it, although it meant very long hours of work. He had always to be up at two o'clock to get his stall ready and to buy new bread.

Years afterwards John Pearce confessed, with a twinkle in his wise old eyes: "I don't know if it was good for them, but they liked new bread and I always gave it to 'em."

He had got past the point at which it had seemed that his courage might break. The extra ten shillings—hard earned—helped him to hold on. Trade began to improve. His stall became better known. At the end of six months he was able to leave the warehouse and give all his time to his original undertaking.

Between his hours of business he began to build a real coffee-stall—the first of its kind to be seen in the streets of London. He bought rough ash logs and had them sawn at the mill.

Then he spent his free time in his brother Joseph's back-yard, building.

He built a double-decker stall, to run on four wheels, with an ornamental canopy. He always had a keen sense of the value of advertisement, and he painted his new stall a brilliant vermilion, like a fire-engine. He put brass rods and brass plates wherever he could find an excuse for them, then polished them, as he proudly imagined, into "the likeness of fine gold."

He looked at the gay two-decker. His first creation. A thing of beauty. Nothing like it had been on the streets before. I am sure his brown eyes twinkled and his big mouth spread in a delighted grin as he named the gay thing of which he was architect, builder, and proprietor "The Gutter Hotel."

He had the name inscribed in bold capital letters on a shining brass plate. "The Gutter Hotel." He had started on the road to fortune.

When he established it on his pitch in the place of the barrow, men stared, then stopped, then had "a snack." The hotel promised to be a success from the first morning.

The bright red stall, shining with polished brass, and ready with steaming hot drinks for customers at four o'clock in the morning, was a very welcome

sight in the drab street—except to rival publicans. Before the new innovation had become really established, the young caterer received an unpleasant shock.

One morning as he was busy serving customers a policeman came up and ordered him to "move on." To move on was to lose his trade; it meant the failure of the Gutter Hotel that he had launched so proudly. But there was no help for it. He changed his pitch, and the next morning did hardly any business. He went to the police inspector and asked why he had been moved, and was told to return to his first pitch. Next day he went back to the corner of East Road. Again the constable told him to "move on." This time it was bad for the constable, who had been bribed by the publican to interfere. The young caterer became suddenly popular. Hoxton waxed indignant at an insult to one of its own, and influential men who before had taken no notice of him now appealed to Scotland Yard on his behalf. He was given official permission to set up his stall every morning from four till eight, upon the one condition that he should be ready to assist the police if ever he were called upon.

For thirteen years he was up at two every morning, and every morning from four till eight

he stood and served, in rain or shine, heat or cold, at a corner where all winds seemed to meet. The stall had no covering, but the owner had a strong constitution and never a thought of rheumatism.

Long before he parted with the Gutter Hotel his takings averaged six pounds a morning.

It was an evil side of London life with which John Pearce came into touch, as well as a drab, hard-working side. He has characterized those quarters around City Road in those days as "a hotbed of infamy."

He said long afterwards: "Words couldn't adequately describe the condition of that district at night. The drunkenness and the blasphemy were horrible. I've been into the lowest quarters of Chicago, but I never came across anything so terrible as in East London in the days when I started the Gutter Hotel. What was then known as Vinegar Ground was within a stone's-throw of my pitch, in the neighbourhood of the old Grecian Theatre and the notorious Eagle public-house. It was a district given over to every description of evil. . . . I'll tell you why I'm so against dancing. Things happened in the dancing-houses in that neighbourhood that were too bad to talk of."

Many of his acquaintances were of the underworld. He knew the most notorious criminals of the day. He knew the women with whom they lived. He knew who were "doing time" and when they were coming "out." He knew—and did not know. Often he was threatened—when the talk around the stall had been too free—lest he should tell anything that he knew. Very often he had to keep his mind from understanding what his eyes told him. But, his stall not being out until four in the morning, he missed many of the characters associated with night stalls. He was patronized mainly by *bona-fide* working men.

One of the many men he knew was Calcraft, the last hangman to hang in public. Calcraft used to pass the stall very early in the morning, on his way to Old Bailey, wearing a top-hat and frock-coat, and looking like a clergyman or a London City Missionary.

But it was not for criminals and hangmen that he had built the Gutter Hotel; it was for the working men who had only pennies and half-pennies to spend, and these came to it, too. The man on his way to work, who before had no choice but "rum and milk," stopped for a cup of hot coffee and a "doorstep." He had to take his "snack" in the open instead of under cover,

but the cup and saucer were clean, the food was clean, and the server was a young man who carried on his trade with a homely good-nature and quiet humour that was winning its way to popularity.

During his "haphazard career" he had learned many things, from the making of a sausage to the making of an oven. As he had realized that it was cheaper to make his own stall than to hire one, he now realized that it would be cheaper to make his cake than to buy it. He bought some bricks from a building that was being demolished, and built an oven for himself in an old coach-house, and there began to bake. Before long he was able to turn out four bushels of cakes every morning.

After a time he engaged his first assistant—a small boy—to be at the stall at four o'clock every morning to wash the cups and saucers. In his leisure the proprietor built other stalls, found new pitches, and let out the stalls to reliable men.

At the end of thirteen years he had saved a capital of twelve hundred pounds, and he determined to start a real shop, where he would be able to provide substantial and cheap meals for the workers. He sold his stall with the

goodwill and the connection for two hundred pounds.

The Gutter Hotel was a gay, attractive thing in a drab street, but it lost its soul when it lost the homely tradesman who had made and kept it. His successor ruined it in a year.

"How?" I asked John Pearce.

"Through little details," he said thoughtfully. "He smoked while he served his customers. He bought his bread overnight. He wouldn't go out if it was wet." He was silent for a few moments. Then he added by way of excuse—"But he hadn't my mother."

CHAPTER VI

THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

"He hadn't my mother," said John Pearce, explaining the man who had failed. But although his mother had much to do with the shaping of his character, she could never have given him the inspiration by which "out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety," for her God was not a God who cared.

Her boys thought of her as a very religious woman, but hers was a religion without a smile. The God of whom she taught them was not a lovable God. She feared Him but she did not love Him. She lived her life courageously, with proud independence; scrupulously honest, and incessantly hard-working, without knowing the joy of the Father's smile that must be very tender as He looks on His lonely children who live among the shadows.

She talked to her boys at bed-time, instinctively knowing the most impressionable time without the help of psychology. When they were tucked

into the straw bed she went over with them the doings of the day. She impressed upon them the necessity of straight living, of strict honesty in every money transaction; she made them hate things unclean.

She created in her boys—especially John—an awe of religion. He could not get away from what she told him. She knew no middle path; there was right and wrong, leading to heaven and hell. There was no way or destiny between. He never questioned the reality of her God—the God she feared but did not love; but he never accepted her harsher beliefs. Sometimes her terrible words of God's judgments made him shudder, but he followed her ethical teaching and tried to be true to it, tried to do justly before a God she had unconsciously depicted as unjust, inspired only by her brave, uninspired life.

When he was a small boy and while his father—who was nominally a Churchman—lived, he was sent to Hoxton Church regularly every Sunday morning. There he sat with other small boys on a narrow form, hidden from the clergyman by a curtain, but safely under the eye of the beadle, who tapped him on the head from time to time to keep him quiet. He sat restlessly through the long, long service that had no meaning for him,

impatient to hear the bolt being drawn—token that he was free from Church for another week.

There were days when he rebelled and broke the Sabbath; when he went walking or fishing; but his rebellion was not really a success—even if it was undiscovered; he was never able to get any pleasure out of it.

After his father's death Hoxton Church knew him no more. He was allowed to attend a Sunday-school where the teaching was a little nearer to his understanding.

From his childhood he was in the midst of ugly things and evil things. The boy of nine worked among men, some of whom were vile, many of whom mocked at everything sacred, yet somehow he grew to adolescence uncontaminated. Coarse words passed him by without leaving any mark; if he heard blasphemies he heard only to loathe.

Two influences protected him: hard work, with his keen, vital interest in all that he did and in everything that he could learn, and his mother's oversight; her unrelaxed, Spartan discipline. It was not that he was afraid of his mother, but he was afraid of hurting her. He could not hurt her without hurting himself and being miserable. So it seemed simpler to try to be good.

When, after working for about five years among rough men who would have scoffed at his mother's ideals, he moved on to the provision merchant's, he found himself in a different atmosphere—an atmosphere that, real boy though he was, he appreciated.

Greaves had morning prayers in his home. That was quite a new experience to John, but he liked it. He found no hypocrisy to spoil the effect. Although his master, in the fashion of the time, exacted long hours of work for small wages, he was strictly honest; he did not use bad language; his life was straight and clean.

Mrs. Greaves grew fond of the boy, and as she was a woman who loved her church, she used her influence to get John to attend it too. So he began to go regularly to Wesley's Chapel in City Road. Then his days had a new interest. Life appeared sunnier because his view was broadening.

Great preachers used to come to that famous Wesleyan Church to preach; good men, scholarly men, but they did not belong to "the people," and often they spoke in a language that the unlearned could not understand. John puzzled over many things. He worried over his own life and the blunders that he seemed to be always making, but he did not find any way of trans-

formation. All his life he had been so conscious of a body; it had had such an unsatisfied craving for food. Now he was conscious of a soul, and he did not know how to manage it.

Then one day he saw a bill that Greaves had put in his window, which stated: "A Converted Thief, a Converted Costermonger, and a Converted Infidel will speak." To the lover of the "Old Brit" and its thrilling melodramas this appealed as something fresh, giving promise of excitement. He read that the preacher-sweep, William Carter, was coming to Wesley's Chapel, bringing his strange friends—once thief, and costermonger, and infidel—with him. He determined to go to hear what they had to say.

What they had to say and the way they said it were new to the lad, who for long had been puzzled by thoughts that he could not understand. These men talked to the "common people" in their own language; they reached their hearts because they spoke as man to man.

John learned that William Carter had a Mission for the unwashed of Southwark, in a hall that seated a thousand people. The next Sunday he walked three miles to see for himself. After that he went every Sunday, for he found what he had been seeking, and his life was changed.

"It was a wonderful thing," was his own verdict, never to be gainsaid.

John Pearce found what he had been looking for through a strange medium, but he never doubted the reality or the worth of what he found; and although with the years the early glow lost its fairest splendour, it was never wholly dimmed. The faith that was born in a mission hall in the company of the rough unwashed, through words repeated, from long, long ago, by a plain illiterate preacher, was a faith to be lived by—standing the test of the storms of more than sixty years.

William Carter was a strange man. He described himself as "a plain common-sensed man with the love of God in his heart." Somehow he managed to get hold of the roughest, whom no Church could reach. He was absolutely sure of the reality of sin, of the devil, and of hell. But he was also sure that "God so loved the world that He gave——" This was a new gospel to John Pearce. He had heard much of hell and the devil; perhaps that was the reason why the emphasis that Carter put on these did not so greatly impress him. It was the other side of his teaching that appealed. As he saw it: "Love was the great theme of Carter's preaching."

It was an extraordinary work that this unedu-

cated, illiterate man did. He began his campaign by preaching in the open air—in the fish-market at Hastings, on the parade at Dover, on Hampstead Heath—and thousands flocked to hear him. He had no reticence in matters of religion. When he encountered a stranger he would not hesitate to inquire "how he was prospering in his soul." He went to a town and, determined to find out whether there were any Christians in it, he knocked at each door and asked, "Is there anyone living in this house who loves Jesus Christ?"

His great text, "the theme of all his preaching," he sometimes prefixed with a rough inquiry: "Will you have salvation or damnation? 'For God so loved the world——' "

He came to London and tried to get a theatre for mission services. He could at first get nothing better than the Penny Gaff in the Euston Road. At that time Richard Weaver—an evangelist of a different type and a "natural orator"—was very popular in London. He was announced to preach one Sunday in the Victoria Theatre, Waterloo Road; but he was taken ill, and William Carter preached in his place.

And the man of the street said: "I never heard it like this before."

Carter had one great text, and he preached from

it again and again. He had one great word of fear —Eternity—and he used it again and again. His speech was rough, his thoughts were crude, he would have repelled the sensitive, and yet—and yet—he worked miracles.

The Salvation Army was not then born. Carter laid hold of the lowest of the low—criminals and outcasts, the despairing, the intending suicides—and they became decent, honest men. He reached out to men and women in the lowest stratum of society; he lifted them up to decency and honesty, and set them in the way of a new life.

This was work that caught the imagination of John Pearce. It was so real. Things were happening. Men were being changed. And behind it all was the new revelation, that the God he had been taught to fear was a God of love. "It was wonderful!"

This revelation changed his life. It brightened his remaining days with the provision merchant; it kept him steady during workless weeks; it was the secret of his strength at Covent Garden, while he worked with the herbalist and the men who did their worst to torment.

Perhaps the younglings who resent all attempts to make them keep the Fourth Commandment

according to Moses have received too much attention. Here is a willing keeper of commandments who had no grievance. To John Pearce, the tall Covent Garden porter, intensely vital, but knowing no games, having no recreations, "Sunday was a glorious day from morning to night." Knowing his quaint humour, his simple homeliness, his practical common sense, one cannot picture him as unmanly or unwholesome in his religion; yet—"Sunday was a glorious day from morning to night!"

A strange Sunday to be glorious!

It began early, for he left his home soon after seven, to reach Waterloo Road for the eight o'clock Bible Class and Prayer Meeting. He has confessed that there was not much teaching at the Bible Class. "A brother would get up as he was moved, and tell of his experiences during the week."

After the Bible Class, a mug of tea and a piece of cake were provided, and by the time these were disposed of it was time for the morning service.

A Church had been formed of the converts from Carter's Mission in the Victoria Theatre. They met in Victoria Hall. It was a remarkable community. The missioner believed that every

man who was "converted" should give testimony publicly, and so make confession of his change of life to his mates. When he had done that it would be less easy for him to go back to his old life. With the Church in Victoria Hall there were about seven hundred in fellowship, most of whom were men, and very many of whom had "done time." A policeman, a postman, an ex-burglar, an ex-prize-fighter were among the officers. The change that had taken place in them was such as all could see—it was unmistakable.

But there was nothing sensational about the Sunday morning's service. Looking back over sixty years, the picture of them was still vivid to the one to whom they were then "very impressive." "The whole atmosphere was worship. We met our Lord in the breaking of bread. There was no preaching. It was just worship. . . . Sometimes a big man, like Lord Radstock, would come in out of curiosity and be caught by the Spirit. Then, perhaps, he would speak."

When the service was over John would go along to where the new railway was in process of construction, and enjoy the meal of bread and butter and cheese that he had had in his pocket all the morning, sitting alone on a mound of sand or gravel until it was time to join "The Band."

"The Band" was composed of young men who every Sunday afternoon paraded the back streets, without musical instruments, to invite the people of the neighbourhood to the evening service in Victoria Theatre. They visited the district of the costermongers, where the lower parts of the houses were reserved for curing haddocks and housing the donkey, while the costers and their families lived above.

"The Band" used to sing, but never to preach. Although they went with an invitation, their reception was doubtful. Often they had water thrown over them. Sunday afternoons were strenuous.

At the end of the afternoon the young men went back to the hall, where tea was provided. Then came the service in the theatre—very different from the quiet morning service with its "breaking of bread"—followed by an "after meeting." Then—for John Pearce—home; over a narrow high bridge by the side of the Blackfriars Bridge that was being rebuilt; home at the end of "a glorious day."

"It wasn't an easy life," he explained. "You had to stand your ground. But it wasn't just a passing fancy. The whole thing was *real*. When you've got the Spirit of God in you, it's wonderful what you can do."

It was, to him, a wonderful life that he had found; and he had found a wonderful Book. He was no theologian; he was no scholar. He did not study his Bible, but he read it and enjoyed it. How real it all was! Those wonderful men—Abraham and Jacob and David and Jonah—how interesting! He never questioned any word of the records. He had no doubts. His religion was more real to him than anything else in his existence.

He carried a twopenny Testament and a ha'penny *Young Convert's Hymn Book* in his pocket, but he did not display them. Sometimes he might talk to one of his fellow-workers at the herbalist's when they were quite alone, but not often. He was not a talker, but his faith was his life.

It was when he had been his own master—with his coster's barrow and half a dozen cups and saucers—for about three months that his mother died. For a long time she had been ailing. John had done his best to provide better things for her than he had been able to do as a lad, but they were still very poor. She could not have what she needed. One day, while her boys watched her, she slipped away so quietly that they did not know when she went. Perhaps she forgot to

say good-bye because she caught the Father's smile that had been hidden by the darkness of her days.

John went for a time to live with his married brother. He spent his days in work and his Sundays at the Mission. Sometimes in the evening, when he had not the time to go over to Victoria Hall, he listened to George Vigeon, an evangelist who preached in a hall in Whitecross Street, which was nearer his home.

Vigeon's congregation—many of whom were costermongers—was a grade higher than Carter's socially. John, who was never a speaker, stood by the missioner when he preached in the open air. It was there, at his work, that the missioner died—as perhaps he would have chosen if he had been given his choice.

But great things used to be done during the week at Victoria Hall. One of Carter's big enterprises was "Extraordinary Tea Meetings." He had tea meetings for costermongers, tea meetings for chimney-sweeps, tea meetings for policemen, tea meetings for converts. The teas were by invitation; there was no charge and no collection.

The evangelist's first experiences were novel. The guests began to arrive an hour before the time. It was difficult to get order out of confu-

sion. The food disappeared in an almost magical fashion. Then Carter attempted a short service. At the end of his prayer the audience clapped loudly. They thought that it was the right thing to do. He said: "Probably they had never sat still for five minutes before. They knew nothing about prayer."

To the Converts' Tea Meeting came many to whom it seemed like a little bit of heaven, such as the woman who had been a gipsy fortune-teller, and having married a hawker was continually knocked about by her husband. "She never knew what communion and fellowship were before," Carter said.

But the strangest was the Rogues', Thieves' and Vagabonds' Tea. The ticket of invitation stated: "No person of good character will be admitted." There were five hundred guests. It is not surprising that Carter should be glad of a strong young man of six-foot-three to act as doorkeeper, and, when the guests were in, to help to distribute the food.

Carter himself was nearly defeated at the Outcasts' Tea. He found himself faced by five hundred of the vicious. "It was enough to unnerve one," he said. But he knew how to get helpers. Although the food vanished much more quickly

than it could have been eaten, and cups and saucers vanished too, he managed at last to get control.

Up rose a man who had once been outcast himself. He had heard Carter's great text, and believing himself "one of the whosoevers," his life had been changed. This man looked at the rough company—drunkards, skittle-sharpers, blasphemers, as they were described—and with rough voice and gesture he began: "There's many o' you coves 'ere to-night that was in penal servitude with me——"

He had captured them.

The men who joined the fellowship of the Church in the Victoria Hall did not join for what they could get. For many it meant the loss of their livelihood. They scarcely were able to get bread. They had got it dishonestly before. They found it very difficult to get it any other way.

The experience of Ned Wright—one-time prize-fighter, many times convict—was quite common. When not otherwise engaged he had been a lighterman, but after his conversion he fell out of work, not because the work was no longer there for him to do, but because he had no lighterman's licence. The fact had never before troubled him; now it looked dishonest. But he could not afford

to buy the licence that his new-born conscience told him was necessary.

The new converts were not backward in witnessing. Ned Wright himself became a noted evangelist—a man powerful to win other men, though a man in whom the "old Adam" remained strong to the end. Another convert—the "Coster King"—told everybody of the change that had taken place in his life: "You said it was only a nine days' wonder, but it has lasted twelve months." Other costermongers displayed notices of meetings on their barrows, and a wood-chopper put a tract into every bundle of wood.

It was an unwritten law that every working man should give one-tenth of his wages to the Mission. From the time he joined it one-tenth of all the profits made by the young caterer was regarded as not his own. But he did not feel impoverished by his giving. His religion was a joy, and Carter, the man who had revealed it to him, was "a sort of god."

The missioner's sympathy was always with the poorest. In the days when very little was done for them he opened a night refuge for outcasts. It had accommodation for two hundred and fifty homeless ones, and was in two sections, one for men and one for women. This was the only such

refuge in the south of London, and it was the largest in the Metropolis that was open all the year round. Carter also opened a soup-kitchen for the resident destitute poor.

In all the missioner's work John Pearce took his part with enthusiasm. It was great to see things happening.

And then came dark days.

Carter had long been trying to work beyond his powers. He took to help him a scholarly man who had failed in the ministry through drink. Although Carter was surrounded by men who had been dragged into depths of degradation through drunkenness, he never preached total abstinence. He regarded alcohol as one of the good gifts of life, which a man might use with safety if he trusted in God. When his new colleague suggested how greatly some stimulant would help him, Carter listened. He began to take spirits to revive his lost energy. He took more and more, until drink became his master, and he who had so often stretched out helping hands and gripped a fallen man who was hopelessly slipping into hell himself died a drunkard.

Years afterwards his one-time disciple said, with tears in his eyes:

"I never needed anyone to talk temperance to

me. I was one of the four who carried Carter to the grave. . . . He had been to me a sort of god."

Presently he added:

"You must not think he was a failure. I owe him more than I can tell. I got something even through his tragedy. . . . Carter made fine men. Some went abroad as missionaries. Preachers and evangelists who did splendid work after the Mission closed were the fruit of his preaching. No; you must not let people think that Carter was a failure."

CHAPTER VII

AN ADVENTURE IN ROMANCE

I

It was while John Pearce was still the proprietor of the Gutter Hotel that he ventured into a new realm of romance.

He had become friendly with some of the young men connected with the Mission, but girls were almost unknown to him. With three of his friends he walked over Blackfriars Bridge many a Sunday behind three girls, to whom they never ventured to speak, although the girls, too, attended the Mission.

John settled in his own mind which was the girl for him. By close contact with many men and women he had become a fair judge of character, and he knew a good girl when he saw her. Feeling certain of her quality, he quietly fell in love. But for a year he did not speak to her. In spite of his six-foot-three he was very shy and altogether inexperienced in the ways of courtship. He did not know how to get nearer to the maiden of his

choice. For a year he followed at a distance, having only his dreams.

"If I could just get half a dozen Windsor chairs and a bit of coconut matting and a few other sticks of furniture, and get that girl to marry me and share my room, I'd be in heaven."

But three girls together are formidable to a would-be lover of one, and the young men, his companions, were hardly less diffident than he. At last he appealed to his brother Joseph, who, having a wife, arranged the introduction that the conventions demanded, followed by an acquaintance-cementing, sociable Sunday tea.

Six weeks later the two were married.

In after-days John Pearce made a fortune, lost it, and made others, but he never knew a happier pride than he had in getting together his first home, he who had been born and had spent his first years in a tiny room off Ivy Street. He took three rooms close to City Road—for he had to be near his "pitch." There was a bedroom, a kitchen, and a sitting-room that was "only for high-days and holidays and Sundays." That sitting-room was his great pride and delight. He was "quite sure that no room in Buckingham Palace was half so grand."

A miller whom he knew, and from whom he

MRS. JOHN PEARCE

used to buy his flour, was just then selling up his home, and from him the young bridegroom bought his drawing-room furniture. It was of walnut-wood and bright green rep, nearly new, and—cheap. He searched Houndsditch for ornaments to add beauty to the room. He had joy in every article that he bought: the pair of lustres with their pendants of cut glass, that were to decorate the mantelpiece; the pair of tall bottle-green glass vases with narrow neck and oval picture of a girl, that would be treasured for many years. He was a rich man.

Saturday, August 6, 1870, was for him a day big with two events. It was his wedding-day and the beginning of his first real holiday. In the morning he was up at two, as usual, to prepare his stall. He served his customers from four to eight in a state of suppressed excitement. When they had gone, and he had cleared up and put everything tidy for the next morning out, he had a "rare rush." Being, as he expressed it, "always hasty and tumbling over myself," he reached the church long before the bride. She had so many advisers she could not easily escape. They did not consider the feelings of the bridegroom, who was "getting in a flummux," while they made her as they thought a bride should be.

After the quiet wedding at St. Mark's, Shoreditch, the two had a real honeymoon—such a holiday as John Pearce had not imagined, and for that he did not forget to be grateful to Sir John Lubbock, who had made it possible. His Bank Holiday Act was just through Parliament. Monday, August 8, 1870, was the first Bank Holiday on record. That meant that no workmen would be looking for the Gutter Hotel on Monday morning. Its proprietor was free from Saturday morning till Monday night. He could have a real holiday with his bride. It was wonderful.

They went to Southend—a quiet place in those days. They stayed at a cottage with a garden in front in the High Street that is now filled with shops.

On Monday night they returned to London to begin many days of work together.

During that week the bridegroom, with rash extravagance, bought his bride a wedding-present: a tea-service in pink and white and gold that she had admired in a shop-window. The Gutter Hotel had not then reached the height of its prosperity, and it seemed a daring thing for the young caterer to spend the greater part of his week's earnings on a tea-service. But there was a thrill in the risk, and the young bride was very proud.

Many years later, when poverty was a thing of the past, John Pearce had still a few treasures preserved from his home, though many had been broken or worn out by the children. One day, when the head of a Burslem firm of potters, with whom he had done many thousands of pounds worth of business, was visiting him, being reminiscent he remarked:

"I have two plates from my first tea-service still."

"I wish you'd let me have them, Mr. Pearce," suggested the visitor.

They were lent to him. Later they were returned with a portrait of husband and wife inserted and glazed by the potters of the famous firm.

From the day the honeymoon ended the young wife helped her husband in his work. She was up at four every morning to cut the bread for hungry customers, spreading the slices with butter or jam or marmalade. She filled wicker baskets—which were carefully scrubbed every day—with neat piles of the food, and a small boy carried them to the stall, where the owner was busy serving the coffee he had made.

They were busy and happy days.

Then came a day when the young wife did not get up to cut the new loaves and fill the clean

wicker baskets. Her husband went off to the stall as usual, but he hurried back at the earlier hour of seven, bringing hot coffee with him. There he found his wife, lying still in bed, with a baby on her arm—the first of a family of twelve.

When the young father went into that warm, quiet room he found something so beautiful that it remained with him always.

"I shall never forget the joy of that woman when she had a son," said the man over eighty years of age. "I had read in the Scriptures of the joy of the mother, but I never imagined it could be like that."

II

For some years after the first great holiday that was their honeymoon, their only outings together were to Epping Forest—generally with a new baby. Lovers of sermons—as once he had been lover of the drama—they would make for the cross-roads, near the Robin Hood, to see old Gipsy Smith, with caravan and tent pitched there and a number of gipsy children around. One of those children—"a chip of the old block"—was to become a second "Gipsy Smith," and—in the estimation of John Pearce—"the greatest evan-

gelist in the world." Not the least of the day's pleasures for the young couple in Epping Forest was to hear the old gipsy preach.

They had been married over four years when the famous American evangelists started their Great Mission in London. Dwight L. Moody, the preacher, and Ira D. Sankey, the singer, opened their London Campaign in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, which had seating capacity for thirteen thousand and standing-room for one or two thousand more. They took halls or theatres in different parts of London. They built a large wooden hall at Bow, where they had monster meetings.

Henry Drummond, who, as a student of twenty-three, was associated with the work of the evangelists, wrote to his father: "How would you like to see *an acre of people*? That is exactly the size of the audience to which Mr. Moody preaches every night in the East of London."

The short, thick-set man, with a strong American accent and a burning sincerity, and his tall, slight companion, with the winning baritone voice, as well as the crowds that assembled to hear them, proved a great attraction to the hard-working couple of City Road. While the evangelists were

there they walked over to Bow on Sunday mornings to hear them.

They had to start early, for the service was at eight o'clock, and there were two babies to be carried. The modern easy-running perambulator had not been invented; the only vehicle in which you could take a baby was a chaise which had to be drawn. The chaise had two small seats, facing each other, with a little well between. The caterer's small boys had not the luxury of a chaise, and if they had, their parents could not well have dragged it behind them all the way to Bow. They were big babies, but they were carried cheerfully, for the evangelists were at the end of the road.

III

Conditions had been gradually changing at Victoria Hall. The people had begun to scatter as the tragedy of the leader was whispered about. Funds ceased to come in.

After Carter's death the community was broken up, but the work was not lost. Most of the members joined the church connected with the sect known as "Brethren" that was nearest to their homes. John Pearce was transferred with others. But before long he grievously offended his

fellow-members by attending a scientific lecture on "Sound" at a time when their chapel was open for service. He was called upon to repent and to promise not to repeat the offence. As he could neither repent nor promise he was ex-communicated, and so—unwittingly—thrust into a larger sphere.

CHAPTER VIII

UP THE NEXT STEPS OF THE LADDER

I

For thirteen years the proprietor of the Gutter Hotel was up at two every morning, except Sunday, and every morning from four till eight he served "doorsteps" of new bread, slabs of good cake, and cups of good coffee. At the end of thirteen years he decided that it was time to advance. Thirteen years was long enough to stand at such a draughty corner; it would be good to work under a roof.

He was in his thirty-second year and his family was increasing. He had lived prudently, and although, being the enterprising and successful one, he had helped his less successful brothers, he had been able to save twelve hundred pounds, and he felt justified in taking fresh risks. When he sold the Gutter Hotel, with its gay red coat, its copper urns, and its bright metal fittings, he had determined with part of his carefully saved capital to open the restaurant he had long wanted.

He discovered a shop in Aldersgate Street, of

THE ORIGINAL GUTTER HOTEL

which there remained a lease of only six and a half years. He took it, understanding nothing of a leaseholder's obligations or the legal view of "dilapidations." He courageously set to work to fit it up as a restaurant for working men.

He had taken his pioneer shop in a district that had been associated with the names of men of vision in the days when Aldersgate Street was a spacious thoroughfare lined with magnificent buildings and beautiful with fine old trees. It was in a house in Aldersgate Street that John Wesley "felt his heart strangely warmed" and he received a new revelation. In a court leading out of Aldersgate Street John Milton lived; and through Aldersgate James VI of Scotland entered the City to receive recognition as James I of England.

But Aldersgate Street changed, as Hoxton and Covent Garden changed. The ancient trees were cut down. The beauty of Aldersgate departed. One does not readily associate the modern busy street, with its thronging traffic, its shops and business houses, with a dreamer of dreams, yet it was because of a homely dream dreamed at the foot of Holborn Hill that the proprietor of the Gutter Hotel opened his "Coffee Bar" in the once famous street—which is supposed to have been part of the old Roman road between Dover

and Cardigan—and introduced the cheap meals for working men which led to his being styled a "public benefactor."

He did not imagine himself a philanthropist. As he saw it, the purchase of his first City shop was purely a commercial speculation. Being a strong temperance advocate, he was anxious for the venture to succeed for the honour of temperance, but he did not undertake it as a piece of philanthropy. He knew enough of the working man and his physical needs to know that in those needs was an opportunity, and knowing it he grasped it.

Up to that time the working man had been almost entirely neglected by the caterer, and the middle classes were not well provided for; there were no popular tea-shops. The new venture was really a challenge to the publican, who provided plenty of drink but took little interest in the provision of food. It may well be, as has been claimed, that the opening of "Pearce's Coffee Bar" in Aldersgate Street revolutionized the catering trade in London.

People who noticed, or heard of, the new shop thought that it was just a novelty that would soon prove to be a failure. They did not realize that many working men who had no intention of

becoming teetotalers valued a substantial meal more than to have drink with their food.

Yet it seemed at first that the pessimists were right. Almost at the start the difficulties appeared. John Pearce has himself told of these:

"I had a superabundance of 'push and go,' but I was a babe in business laws. I just knew what a lease was, but I'd never heard of 'dilapidations,' in the legal sense. Certainly the place was dilapidated! It had been something in the oil and colour line, and was by no means weather-proof.

"No sooner was the purchase completed than the ground landlord came down on me for dilapidations. . . . I interviewed the freeholder and offered to lose a hundred pounds of my bargain if he'd release me. He refused.

"Then a heartening thing happened. I was coming out of my place one day when I ran into a gentleman I knew by sight but to whom I'd never spoken.

" 'Hullo, Pearce!' he said. 'What are you doing here? This isn't your pitch!'

"I was in the Slough of Despond and wanted someone to help me to firm ground. I thought this might be 'Mr. Help,' so then and there I told him my troubles.

"He clapped me on the back. 'I've watched you

for years,' he said. 'You're not the man who goes back. Forget about your landlord. You'll succeed. Some day, Pearce, you'll be driving in your own carriage.'

"His words had a magical effect on me. It was just what I needed—someone to believe in me, in my power to make good. I turned back into the shop and wrote a notice, 'Carpenters Wanted,' and stuck it in the window."

It was the day of the odd-jobber. The owner of the "dilapidations" was himself something of a jack-of-all-trades, and when he had secured half a dozen others the work progressed rapidly. It was not so romantic as making something quite new, as he had made the Gutter Hotel, but he put his will into it, and before long the place was transformed from "the horrid thing I had bought" into a bright, attractive shop of which he could be proud.

He did not learn what changed the spirit of the crusty freeholder and turned him into a staunch friend, but never again did the leaseholder hear that fearsome word "dilapidations." The four years that followed were years of happy prosperity.

He had called the house "Pearce's Coffee Bar," but he provided much more than coffee and "snacks." While he was a porter at Covent

Garden he had sometimes gone to a soup and pudding shop in Long Acre. He explained: "I was hungry; the puddings were filling; so I have had a great respect for meat puddings ever since." He knew how to make them and how to serve them. His meat puddings in Aldersgate Street were popular from the first.

He and his family lived over the shop, an arrangement that brought unsought-for variety into his busy life. It was not a place in which to bring up children with ease. The rooms were small; there was no garden and no open space near. The mother helped to serve the customers. The industrious Irish Biddy—who went about the house with short skirt, stockingless and shoeless—had many claims on her attention. Sometimes the children were lost. Not far from St. Bartholomew's Hospital there was a small green—the only such place in the neighbourhood. The children sometimes strayed away and played in less pleasant places. Accidents now and then enlivened the already lively dinner-hour.

One day a small boy came home bleeding, with a hole in his nose—a fearsome sight for a man intent on serving hungry customers. The child had got caught in the railings at Smithfield Market. The wound healed, but the scar remained.

Another day the hubbub of the shop was stopped by a greater hubbub outside. This time the father had "a rare scare." He ran to the door—to see one of his children lying under a cab in the road.

Another busy morning, when he was serving dinners, he was startled by the crash of broken glass. Once again he had "a scare." As he hurried across the shop he saw a wriggling figure dangling through the broken skylight. The child had been trying to toboggan down the sloping roof outside. The end was nearly tragedy.

One winter day a small boy discovered a frozen pond and no "keeper" near it. He ventured on the ice and went through.

Two other boys came up. They had been looking forward to some fun on that ice. That youngster had broken it and had spoiled their fun! In revenge they kept him there in the icy water for an hour. When the child got home he crept upstairs without telling anyone, and sat shivering in his wet clothes by the fire, trying to get warm.

Before long he was down with rheumatic fever.

Another child was scalded; another just escaped being burned when the room in which the father and mother were sleeping was in flames.

The children had the usual ailments of child-

hood, and the infectious complaints were nursed without any restrictions from an outside authority. But somehow, as the father said, "they got through." Whatever anxieties they brought, whatever "scares" they gave him, he agreed altogether with the one who wrote: "Happy is the man who hath his quiver full."

At the end of four years he made over his first shop to his brother Joseph—to whom he felt he owed a big debt for the introduction to the winsome girl who had become his wife—and moved to a bigger place in Farringdon Street, opposite the Memorial Hall, and the site of the old Fleet Prison, where he believed that he could do even better than in Aldersgate. He had shown that, whatever his limitations, he could make a success of the catering business, and he took the basement and the ground-floor of the larger premises with a confidence that proved to be justified.

He had always a keen sense of the value of advertisement, and the sign that he used first over the Farringdon Street shop proved to be a very effective one. It caught the attention of the people who saw it, as in the earlier days the gay Hotel of the Gutter had done. One of its attractions was in the suggestion that it was a mistake. Did the caterer know how to spell? Had he over-

looked a blunder of the sign-writer? Should they put him right? The good speller always feels superior to the bad one—with a kindly glow of gratitude for that sense of superiority.

It was the year of the Queen's Jubilee. The great procession would pass through Ludgate Circus within a stone's-throw of the Farringdon Street shop. The opportunity must not be missed. The shop should be as brightly illuminated as any other building—with the words "Pearce and Plenty" in big flaring letters where everyone could see them.

"The sign was outside on the pavement, waiting for the gas-fitters, when a well-dressed, kindly-faced lady stepped into the restaurant. She asked to see the proprietor. On my assuring her that I was he, she said: 'I felt I should be doing you a kindness in pointing out that you have misspelt a word in your new sign. There is no *r* in Peace!' 'Oh, that's the way we spell it here,' I told her. I'm afraid she thought me ungrateful."

The new shop was a success from the first.

If you pay only fourpence for a good quality substantial meat pudding you cannot expect a waiter to be included. With "Pearce and Plenty" every man was his own waiter. There were

swinging signs in the shop indicating where knives and forks were to be found, and there was a desk at which silver could be changed into coppers, so that the right money should be tendered. Anyone who could not wait for a meal—or preferred to eat it in solitude—could buy the food hot and take it away. There was choice between meat puddings, chops, steaks, and sausages. "I've no time for faddists," the busy caterer explained.

He was now in the centre of the newspaper world. He had begun to cater for another sort of "working man." There are names that in after-years Mr. Pearce kept in reserve or whispered quietly as a secret; for that busy shop in Farringdon Street provided meals for many a man who then had barely got his foot on the ladder up which he was later to climb to high places. It was the resort of shabby "penny-a-liners" and other impecunious literary aspirants, as well as of "printers' devils" and men from the streets, who needed much keeping in order.

The caterer was busy in his shop from six in the morning until eight at night. He had no leisure to speculate whether he might be serving a future Prime Minister or a future man-of-letters. He learned such names later. An afterwards leading publisher had been a constant

customer of the Gutter Hotel. Unknown and unnoticed, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald came regularly for a meal to "Pearce and Plenty."

Sometimes in later days a great man would pause by John Pearce to whisper: "I remember those pies, Mr. Pearce!", or: "How I used to enjoy those puddings!"—his thoughts going back to the days when the man who provided cheap meals was a kind of benefactor.

Many years afterwards the pioneer caterer received an unexpected token of appreciation of those first cheap dinners. He was going, as usual, the round of his shops, and was just about to get into his car, when a well-dressed man stepped up to him and handed him a parcel, with the explanation:

"Mr. Pearce, I have carried this about with me for days, hoping for a chance of giving it to you. It's a little souvenir of the time when your puddings kept me going—when fourpence *was* fourpence."

He passed on without telling his name, but Mr. Pearce treasured the beautiful paper-knife of gold-edged enamel that he found beneath the brown paper, the token of grateful remembrance for the days of Pearce and Plenty.

When he gave up the Aldersgate Street shop he

found a home for himself and his family at Clapton, and as they grew older he was able to provide for his sons the education which he himself had never had. He sent the boys to the City of London School, and although he did not speculate about the future of the men to whom he served out his six hundred puddings a day, he enjoyed a feeling of pride that the sons of the lad who was born in a tiny room in Hoxton were schoolfellows of those who might one day be great in the land.

Those were busy days for Pearce and Plenty. At the dinner-hour, when the hooters had sounded at the big printing places in the neighbourhood, the queue for the cheap dinners often stretched far down the street. Rapid service was essential, and it was well provided.

"The puddings, steaming hot, were brought up on great trays. A man who could turn puddings out of a basin quicker than a conjurer can produce an egg from his left elbow landed one on to a hot plate from the great stack at his side and passed it to my right hand. With my left I planted a big spoonful of hot potatoes by the side of the pudding, handed it to the customer, and received fivepence in return.

"I wonder how many fivepences I've taken!

Millions! I never needed to count them. Nobody ever succeeded in deceiving me. The moment fourpence, or even fourpence ha'penny, touched my palm, I knew it. None of my regular customers tried to trick me. They knew better! But a newcomer occasionally did!

"I usually served three thousand meals in this way between twelve and two."

Although there were no waiters in "that truly wonderful Farringdon Street shop" during the busy dinner-hour, there were boys who made their way through the crowds with big trays, crying: "Jam or plum! Jam or plum!" and supplied a "sweet course" of plum pudding or jam roll for a penny to any customer who wanted it.

The "printers' devils" needed keeping in order. The appearance of a more than ordinarily respectable customer provoked them to the use of potatoes and similar missiles. The proprietor, serving his twenty-five puddings a minute, could not stop to keep order. One day the "Coffee Bar" was visited by Colonel Fraser, Commissioner of Police. He came at a time when the shop was crowded and the queue extended far down the street. He watched the meals being served. Certainly Pearce and Plenty's was a "public institution!" He offered the proprietor the services

of a constable for two hours a day to regulate the traffic. After the arrival of the policeman potatoes returned to their legitimate use.

II

The caterer's advertisements were always homely and touched with a humour that the man in the street could appreciate. One day he found himself before a convex mirror. His tall, thin figure had become rotund and complacent—truly a well-nourished figure. He looked at it with a broad grin. "That's what a man's like when he's just had one of my puddings," he said to himself. Then he stood before another. He was a shrunken, shrivelled creature! What an opportunity for advertisement!

He acted upon it.

He had two mirrors made—concave and convex—and placed one on either side of the door of his restaurant, and labelled them: "Before and after dining at Pearce and Plenty's." Children would go out of their way to see those mirrors and the queer distorted images of themselves that the mirrors gave. Then they went home and talked about them—and others went to see.

It was at that time, too, that he used for his

meat puddings the homely slogan that at once became popular: "As good as mother makes them."

He had some practical ideas that he could not carry out alone; those he took to the man who could help him. To provide tea that was "stewed" or made with any but freshly boiling water was against his business principles, but how to serve it otherwise was a big problem. He experimented along the lines of inventing a machine from which the water could not be drawn until it boiled, but he had not the necessary technical knowledge to perfect it. He took his idea to Herbert Sumerling, then a tin-smith working at his bench. Herbert Sumerling took the caterer's "very primitive affair," and from it evolved a practical working machine. This was followed by a machine by which customers could be given coffee fresh and hot without any grounds.

The pioneer had to seek out many devices which have since become commonplaces. Nowadays every big restaurant has "all these things glorified." By the prosperous firm founded by the man who was then but a tin-smith any novice can be put right in the fitting up of a kitchen, large or small, with the latest appliances.

Another form of advertisement that was of

value far beyond his own shop was the fixing of a big clock outside the building—a clock that, by the then new electrical process, kept Greenwich time. London clocks were in those days notoriously bad time-keepers. Workers streaming to and from their work looked up to the big clock that was set by Greenwich, and, before correcting their watches, they saw the inviting sign: *Pearce and Plenty.*

John Pearce had at first taken only the basement and the ground floor of the building in Farringdon Street, but as he found that he "had struck oil and was making money fast," his ambition grew. He had provided clean, cheap meals for thousands; could he not provide clean, cheap beds—at least for scores? The landlord was a clergyman, and, as his tenant described him, "rather panicky" and afraid of the building remaining empty. He was glad of the chance to let it; so John Pearce was able to get the first, second and third, and finally the top floors on "fairly good terms."

As soon as he had taken the whole of the building—except one large front room—he had a separate entrance and staircase built. He divided the bedrooms into eighty single cubicles; other rooms he furnished as library, smoking-room, reading- and writing-room. Before long he had opened his first Temperance Lodging House,

the Shaftesbury Hotel, where a man could get a decent bed for a shilling a night.

This was the pioneer of many hundreds of such hotels.

The busy caterer became more and more self-dependent. He realized that to have his own central electric light plant would mean a great saving of expense, as the substitution of a personally owned ham-box on wheels for a hired barrow had been a saving in the early days of his catering venture. He had a six-horse-power engine installed for supplying electric light and driving the sausage-machine.

He soon discovered the prejudice of the working man against "made-up" foods. Although the sausages he provided were fresh, home-made and genuine, the majority of the customers passed them by for a "cut from the joint." They liked "to know what they were eating."

As the business grew the pudding kitchen was transferred to the top of the building. That kitchen had eight large steam ovens, made according to the owner's own plans and heated by steam supplied by twenty-three-horse-power boilers. The man who had once built his own understood the ways of ovens.

Every morning at six o'clock three men began

their work of making puddings, and they made puddings all day long. The number of beef-steak puddings averaged fifteen hundred a day, and they made many hundreds more of jam and plum.

The vegetable and joint kitchen was in the basement and the grill-room on the first floor.

The farmer sees the effect of the weather in the state of his crops, the minister in the fullness or emptiness of his pews, the caterer in the appetites of his customers. The man who supplied six thousand meals a day found that in the summer he needed two tons of potatoes a week; in the winter four. He supplied more tea and milk in the summer; more cocoa in the winter.

(At first his customers thought that the cocoa was poor because the spoon would not stand up in it, but they grew to like it in time.)

The caterer has, too, his own way of telling the day of the week—by his takings.

Monday was the least profitable day at Pearce and Plenty's, because many workmen brought cold meat from the Sunday's joint with them for their dinner. Friday came next, because funds were getting low, although some came back for a good meal at night after they had been paid.

The coins taken varied with the day of the week. On Monday half-crowns and florins were plentiful;

on Tuesday they were fewer; on Wednesday they were rare; and on Thursday there were none at all from the regular customers. On Friday the highest coin was sixpence, and on that day there were more farthings than during all the rest of the week. On Friday two extra girls had to be put on for two hours at the cash desk.

John Pearce had got a long way from those modest beginnings when, with a hired coster's barrow and half a dozen cups and saucers, he set out valiantly to be the first London caterer for the working man. But he still began work at four every morning; he still served meals, with his coat off, during the busy dinner-hours; the growing business was still his own; and Sundays were still a joy.

CHAPTER IX

ENLARGING HIS CIRCLE

I

For some time the large front-room which was the only room in the Farringdon Street house that was not used by Pearce and Plenty stood empty, but one morning, before the dinner-hour rush began, an interesting visitor came into the shop and asked if he might have the key to view it.

Mr. Pearce saw "a bright-eyed, fresh-complexioned, alert-looking, bearded man, well dressed and with a slight limp," who had "a pleasant voice and a courteous manner." Afterwards he learned that this was George Newnes, the founder of *Tit-Bits*, the first of the popular penny weeklies.

He heard that his visitor had been "a coffee-house keeper in Manchester," and had taken to journalism. He did not then know how different the opportunities of this trim, shrewd business man had been from his own.

The son of a Congregational minister, George Newnes had known by experience what "home"

means at its best. His life of adventure was along less rough roads than the working-man's caterer had had to travel; but both were keen business men; both were bent on success; both realized the importance of good advertisement; and both were out to give what the public wanted, where what they wanted was clean. Though education and outlook and occupation were so different, there must have been something in common between the caterer who had set out to provide clean meals for the workers for whom such had not been provided before and the journalist who had worked out an original plan to provide a popular paper "as clean as a new pin, with stories as witty and humorous and brilliant as those the unclean minds can invent."

Both men were enterprising and adventurous, though their gifts were of such different orders. George Newnes, while but a young apprentice in a mercantile firm in London, had shown an extraordinary talent for figures. His talent was valuable to the firm, as it was afterwards to himself. It was while he was acting as the firm's representative in Manchester that he put together the odds and ends of stories, anecdotes, and borrowed wit, a "pot-pourri of boiled book, magazine, and paper," which he dreamed might be

the forerunner of a new and popular fashion in journalism.

When he discovered that he could find no one with faith enough to advance the necessary capital, he looked round for ways to make more money himself. He took a large unused cellar in the city, transformed it—as John Pearce had transformed the great empty warehouse—and opened "The Vegetarian Company's Saloon." Before long he was able to sell it at such a profit that he could finance his own paper, and he published the first number of *Tit-Bits* in Manchester on October 30, 1881. The paper was an immediate success in the north.

After three years George Newnes came to London to find a new home for *Tit-Bits*, and so one morning he and John Pearce met. Before long the editor was established in the spacious front-room, and presently above it appeared the first big sky-sign ever seen in London—the name of the first popular weekly in huge golden letters about ten feet high. It caused as much comment as the smaller queer mirrors near by.

Pearce and Plenty's customers being mainly of the newspaper world were very much interested in the new neighbour, and stories of his triumphs reached strange heights. The sensational prize

competitions that George Newnes originated were freely discussed, and especially the record prize of a villa residence.

But the competition that brought another interesting personality into the neighbourhood of John Pearce, and so concerned him most, was that which carried a prize of £100 a year and a position on the staff of the paper. It was won by Arthur Pearson, who was then under nineteen and had no knowledge of journalism. In seven months he had become George Newnes's right-hand man, and he remained with him for nearly five years.

John Pearce never knew intimately that keen, attractive journalist whose greatest achievement was to be the bringing of light and hope to thousands of blinded men, but they were akin in their devotion to the needs of children, and long before the Fresh Air Fund was started, John Pearce had taken large parties out into the country that was to them a strange land. He always believed that those outings—in the days when they were unique—gave the young man working near by the idea that grew into the popular "Fresh Air Fund" that has given glad days to thousands.

John Pearce always had a specially warm corner

in his heart for children—as his first proud present of those tiny blue ankle-strap shoes suggests; and as prosperity increased, one of his greatest delights was to provide treats for some of the multitude of little ones who were still, as he explained, in the "pit from which I was digged." He loved to give. Probably the majority of those who benefited by his gifts were children.

Before there was any public provision for necessitous children—before school meals were dreamed of—he got together two hundred of the poorest on the first Monday in each month and gave them a good supper.

The children crowded in the street an hour before the time for which they had been invited. By eight o'clock—what an assembly! The busy host, who had been working since six in the morning, took the lead in serving, and saw that every child had one of the famous beef-steak puddings and some potatoes, a goodly slice of jam-roll, and a cup of cocoa—such a meal as he himself had never known when he was a boy.

But his greatest joy—his "real red-letter day"—was the day on which he took two thousand youngsters to Chingford.

He sent the food ahead in a pantechnicon—not

forgetting hundreds of bags of sweets that were to be distributed as prizes for running and other sports. He could not himself join his small guests until the afternoon of the "real red-letter day." Perhaps his imagination did not picture for him the excitement of the early morning before the train started.

Some of the children were ragged and bootless, and in their homes no preparations had been made; but in the homes where there was a mother who cared, the girls had been talking of the "treat" for weeks. Their very best frocks—some of long descent—had been washed; their best petticoats—also descended—had been stiffly starched; for every mother who was a mother knew that it was really a great occasion. Most of the small girls had been vigorously tubbed the night before, and their long hair washed and tightly plaited. Very early in the morning they were up and dressed—their round tickets sewn on to the front of their frocks—too excited to consider breakfast. More than one distracted parent threatened: "Now you just eat something or you shan't go!" And so the little girls ate rebelliously, anxious to get away.

But some of the boys did not wait for a possible breakfast. In case they should by some evil chance

oversleep, Tom came to spend the night with Dick and Harry. There was no danger of oversleeping then! At four o'clock they tumbled out of their untidy bed, got into their clothes, stole down the dark stairs, opened the door, and with a triumphant shout: "Good-bye, muvver! Good-bye, farver!" were off down the street beyond recall.

They sat on the kerb in the chill of the early morning and drank some coffee from a coffee-stall; then they hurried to the station—to find it locked up and other boys waiting outside.

How impatiently they waited! . . .

At last the doors were opened. Helter-skelter up the steps dashed the youngsters. A train stood in the station. It must be theirs. All the doors were locked. But what are locked doors to boys out for their one "treat" of the year? Through the carriage windows they tumble one another—careless of officials or of the train's destination.

The day is theirs. It is good to be alive.

Their host arrived in the afternoon. He said: "The sight in Epping Forest that day was enough to make angels weep, although the children were enjoying themselves hugely. . . . Many a little London 'nipper' had to be father and mother to two or three brothers and sisters younger than

himself. . . . John Kirk—not then a knight—and his helpers looked after the children for me, from the early morning.

"I was walking round the big catering tent, when I spied a little chap who had just received his meat-pie. He was evidently curious to know what this magic box of crust contained, and he'd just taken the 'lid' off as I came upon him unawares.

"There he stood, gazing upon the wonders he had discovered and hardly able to believe his eyes. He chuckled and gurgled and talked to himself: 'Wotcher, meat! Wotcher, meat!' Meat was a novelty to him. He was going to have the treat of his life!

"From those Chingford 'outings' Arthur Pearson got the idea for his Fresh Air Fund, which does such splendid work for poor kiddies."

George Newnes and John Pearce were in measure rivals in the art of advertising. Not long after the great golden letters appeared over the office of *Tit-Bits*, there appeared the name of the "Shaftesbury Hotel" over the rooms above. The words changed the aspect of the building, which before might have belonged altogether to the enterprising editor. Soon afterwards *Tit-Bits* was moved to Burleigh Street, then later to the busy

building in Southampton Street which was to become the headquarters of so many popular periodicals.

II

There was much talk in the City of the crowds that were coming to dine at Pearce and Plenty's. A rumour of the six thousand meals served every day reached the ears of Sir Edward Sullivan—a philanthropist baronet whose good deeds were often unnecessarily costly.

Sir Edward was interested in the dock labourers, that great body of men, drawn from all classes and all trades, who work by the wharves and quays and warehouses that line the first miles of the river banks of the Port of London—the mud-banked river with its "legends of ships that have gone, and of men who knew them, and traditions of a service older than anything Whitehall knows."

Sir Edward, bent on investigations, had discovered the docker; he had learned of his work and his pay. The first was hard; the second poor—but neither harder nor poorer than the work and pay of many other labourers. The dockers who were "permanent" received about a guinea a week; the "casuals" were often unem-

ployed, waiting day after day at the dock gates in vain.

Sir Edward knew that many of these men were continually underfed. He and his friends had spent over £5,000 on an uneconomic scheme to supply them with food. He had fitted up an elaborate kitchen with expensive appliances. He had organized it as a catering centre, and had put in charge of it his bailiff, a man who, as the genuine caterer realized as soon as he saw him, was "quite out of his latitude"; and had appointed as secretary an impecunious curate—a man equally inexperienced in the ways of catering.

A banker who passed the Farringdon Street shop every day and took note of the crowds that frequented it, happened one night to be the neighbour of Sir Edward Sullivan at a dinner. Sir Edward talked of the dockers. He told the banker how troubled he was by the conditions under which they lived. He told of his attempt to supply them with cheap hot meals—distributed in containers—and how lamentably his scheme had failed. After all his plans and his big outlay he was taking only two shillings a day.

The banker, remembering the long queues that he had seen, said: "You ought to see that man Pearce, in Farringdon Street. He'd put you right."

When Sir Edward Sullivan got back to his home at Palace Gate, he wrote to John Pearce: ". . . I would like you to come and see me. Can you come on Sunday? . . ."

The working man's caterer had little experience of correspondence. He was not used to receiving letters from men of a class so different from his own. He showed Sir Edward's letter to his wife. His wife—always quick to understand the practical needs of her family and of her husband's growing business—could not understand a letter from a baronet, a stranger. It roused her suspicions. Many rough deeds were being done at the time—as the papers recorded. She was afraid of those Fenians! She was sure that this letter was part of a plot to get hold of her husband.

"I wouldn't go near!" she said emphatically. "They're going to shoot you."

Her husband was not quite sure about a plot, but as he could not find any satisfactory reason for the invitation he took his wife's advice so far as to be cautious. He wrote and thanked Sir Edward, and explained that he was working exceedingly hard and that he did not pay visits on Sundays. He conceded that if Sir Edward would see him on any weekday, he would try to make an appointment.

After another letter, in which Sir Edward said that he would like to visit Pearce and Plenty's, the proprietor sent him a cordial invitation, and one day at noon, when the crowd was greatest, and when a visitor could hardly get in the door, Sir Edward Sullivan arrived—to see how catering could be made a success.

He found the master working in his shirt-sleeves. He watched the work. He studied the man. From that day he became a friend.

"He was always a friend," said John Pearce. "He was a great man—a gentleman. . . . He made no profession of religion. . . . He put me on a higher pinnacle than my ability deserved. He used to arrange all sorts of interviews with great people who were getting muddled, because he thought that I could put them right."

Afterwards, when Sir Edward had proved his belief in the man who could succeed where he failed, John Pearce said to him with a smile: "You might have been taken in."

"Ah, Pearce," he retorted, "I can read character. I knew that I wasn't going to be."

After that visit Mr. Pearce went down to Limehouse at Sir Edward's request.

Dockland was new to him. He had no time to read its legends—to think of the ships that vanish

in the morning mists on their way to lands unknown. He was one of Dockland's strangers. "The foreshore to them is the unending monotony of grey streets, sometimes grim, often decayed, and always reticent and sullen, that might never have seen the stars nor heard of good luck. . . . Mud, taverns, pawnshops, neglected and obscure churches, and houses that might know nothing but ill-fortune."

To John Pearce, the Dockland that can bring romance home to an imaginative child like H. M. Tomlinson was "all gin and matches."

He found the amateur's kitchen "splendidly appointed"—and totally ignored. Sir Edward's bailiff, accustomed to the management of keepers, knew nothing of the ways or the needs of dockers. He was longing to get home to Tetworth. He appealed to the visitor.

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Pearce, get me out of this. It isn't in my line. I want to get back to the country."

John Pearce took over the remains of the expensive philanthropic toy. He used what he could and closed the place.

The meeting with Sir Edward Sullivan led to a great change in the life of the "pioneer caterer."

From the time he was nine he had fought his

way upwards. At nineteen he had determined to be his own master and do alone the work that he knew he was capable of doing. From the Gutter Hotel he had gone to Aldersgate Street. When he had made his first shop a success he had passed it over to his brother, and had taken the larger premises in Farringdon Street. Trade had increased. He had opened the Shaftesbury Hotel. For four years the growing business remained his own, and he was saving £1,000 a year. He had a house at Clapton. His boys were being well educated. His home was his castle. His Sundays were a joy. He was content.

But he was not allowed to stand still. Sir Edward Sullivan had been so delighted with what he had seen of the working of the restaurant, and of what he had seen of the man who had organized it, that he was ready to offer "almost anything" if he would join forces with him and his friends.

He said: "You have the idea I have wanted. Extend it."

"But I don't know anything about companies," Mr. Pearce expostulated.

"You don't need to. You won't have any trouble. All you have to do is to go ahead."

The man who had succeeded alone was per-

suaded. A small company was formed with a capital of £20,000, and he was appointed the managing director.

"I felt that I was better on my own. But one thing tempted me. I knew that—alone—everything depended on myself, on the push and drive that were part of me. I had worked too hard. I had stood so much and so long that I had to undergo an operation for varicose veins. Might not a new arrangement, with these influential people, make for greater security for my wife and large family?"

But he did not realize that the day of his freedom was past.

CHAPTER X

JOHN PEARCE AND SOME OTHERS

I

It is impossible to be sure of the origin of movements whose beginnings are almost imperceptible, and no man can with certainty take sole credit for an idea, the growth of which has needed not only the sower, but the ploughman, and the early and the latter rain.

Did Sir Arthur Pearson get his idea of the Fresh Air Fund from the thousands of children taken by John Pearce to Epping Forest in the days when "treats" were practically unknown? Perhaps he himself could not have been sure. Although the Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* was able to work out the idea on a much more elaborate scale, before his great fund was launched the work of one man and his helpers gave thousands of the very poor the only glimpse of the country that they enjoyed during the whole year.

Did Mr. Pearce suggest the feeding of necessitous school-children?

Perhaps. Or, may be, the practical thought was born in another man's brain about the same time as in his own. When he was seeking for guests to invite to his monthly supper and to the breakfasts he provided for children that would otherwise have gone breakfastless, he visited schools in the neighbourhood of the New Cut and had many talks with head-teachers about the condition of their scholars—conditions which were in many cases pitiable. The children were not only without shoes and stockings—which are not necessarily an asset—but they were dirty and ill-nourished. He found a number—but not all—of the teachers sympathetic. They should have realized sooner than the outside official that it is impossible to train a brain satisfactorily in a half-starved body; yet when, in 1900, a bigger scheme was attempted, obstacles were put in the way of the feeding of school-children by the teachers and the managers as well as by some of the members of the School Board.

II

The name of John Pearce is not connected with the "Rowton House" scheme, but he had more than a little to do with that pioneer lodging-house for workers.

As trade increased John Pearce employed more and more men, and he was always interested to know the conditions of their lives outside the shop.

"Where are you putting up, Sam?" he would ask a man from the north.

"I sleep with Ned, Guv'nor," might be the answer.

If there was a "Ned" at hand, or if the employee had a home not far from his work, he was not badly off; but for a man who had come from the country to an unknown London there were only the fourpenny doss-houses, which the caterer knew as "dens of infamy, frequented by men, women and children. There was no fit place for a lad unless he could turn in with a mate."

The result of his inquiries among his men was that he determined to find or to build a lodging-house for them and for others like them. He began to look round for a possible site.

He discovered a big building in Golden Lane, off Old Street, that for years had been neglected. It comprised the first artisan dwellings that had been erected in London. It was provided with swimming-baths, washing-baths, and recreation-rooms. But it had never been appreciated. While it was occupied it had been the scene of drinking, gambling and fighting, and for a number of years

it had stood empty, becoming more and more dilapidated.

John Pearce considered it, and decided that by careful planning he could transform the empty building into a practical lodging-house for his own workers and others. His plans matured so rapidly in his mind that before he had mentioned them to any one of the company to which he now belonged, he had given his hotel-to-be the high-sounding name of the London and New York.

He took his scheme to Sir Edward Sullivan, thinking that he would "take up with it like hot rolls." But he was mistaken; and "Sir Edward was a man who could sit on you!"

He looked at the scheme and thought it unpractical; he could not see in it any chance of success. Mr. Pearce pleaded. He had already planned such big things for the London and New York!

"Let me do this, sir."

"I won't!" said Sir Edward emphatically and finally.

And the man who now belonged to a company could not attempt the enterprise alone.

But although Sir Edward Sullivan would not personally take any responsibility or give any assistance in planning lodging-houses, he did not

forget about the scheme. When, later, he learned that his friend, Lord Rowton, had been thinking and planning along the same lines, he remembered John Pearce.

Lord Rowton, for many years the private secretary of Disraeli, was an accomplished man of winning personality. He was a bachelor, without home ties, and much of his leisure was spent in making himself personally familiar with the conditions of the very poor of London. He had been trying to form a practical scheme to provide cheap dwellings, both in London and Dublin.

One day Mr. Pearce received a letter from Sir Edward Sullivan in which he said: "Lord Rowton wants to meet you. . . . Hand your scheme over to him."

John Pearce thought this "the biggest set-back I had had." But he met Lord Rowton. He explained his plans—which had failed in regard to Golden Lane—and he talked of the need of respectable lodging-houses, as he knew it from close contact with the workers.

Lord Rowton determined to "rise and build." He put down £30,000 towards the new enterprise. He visited the Shaftesbury Hotel and discussed many practical points with its originator.

After some months, when Rowton House, Vauxhall, was nearing completion, Lord Rowton wrote: "In making his final arrangements, he would be very glad if he might again refer to Mr. Pearce for advice."

The building was opened at the end of 1892. It had four hundred and twenty cubicles—which the men preferred to separate bedrooms—a well-stocked library, and large dining-rooms and recreation-rooms. Four years later the Rowton House Company, Limited, was formed. It was put on a firm commercial basis. It proved to be a success and was imitated in other countries.

John Pearce had more than a thought in the enterprise, but his name did not appear on the prospectus.

III

Another philanthropically minded adventurer into the East End who consulted Mr. Pearce was Lady Ashburton, the vivid and eccentric little woman—widow of Lord Ashburton—then well past middle life. She had recently come under the influence of Dwight L. Moody, and the current of her thought had been diverted from its former course. Her keen enthusiasm and some-

times embarrassing energy were now directed to the task of "doing good."

One morning when John Pearce was serving dinners in his Farringdon Street shop, "in the midst of one of my rushes," a carriage and pair stopped outside. The customers near the window and outside stared as they saw a liveried footman spring from the box and open the door for an energetic little lady who walked straight into the crowded shop, followed by a London City Missionary.

Lady Ashburton did not understand the demands of business. She had heard of Mr. Pearce, and she had rushed off to see him. See him she must, however many customers were demanding their dinners!

Mr. Pearce could not deny her; neither could he talk to her while he was handing out puddings and potatoes. He put on his coat and led the way upstairs to one of the small cubicles of the Shaftesbury Hotel, furnished only with a bed, a chair, and a camp wash-basin.

"It seemed so absurd," he said, "for her to be talking to me in that small place, not much more than six feet square. Her ladyship sat on a chair and I sat on the edge of the bed. She talked to me about some of the things she had learned when

she was visiting the docks: of the sailors who were trapped by women and given drink and robbed. She was restless to help. She didn't know how. She had the money and the enthusiasm, but she hadn't the knowledge.

"She had been through Canning Town and the East End. Tidal Basin was a terrible place. She wanted to work there. There was so much misery. She wanted to supply cheap food, but her ideas were uneconomic. She asked me to help her, but I belonged to the company then, and I couldn't help without their consent.

"She had tried to buy up one of the most thriving public-houses in Dockland. She told me that she wanted 'to feed these poor dockers.' She said: 'I don't want to make a profit. I want to keep the men away from the public-house and its temptations.'

"I explained that even with such a motive she ought not to undersell others. I said: 'There are many coffee-house-keepers at Custom House who get their living by selling food. If you undersell them they will be ruined. If you work so as to make five per cent. profit you will not injure local trade.' "

The two talked together for some time; then, when the cubicle conference was ended, Lady

Ashburton passed once more through the busy shop; the footman closed the door of her carriage, shutting her out from the interested workers who lived in a different world, and the carriage rolled away.

As she could not buy up the licensed premises, Lady Ashburton bought Custom House Terrace. It was rebuilt, with large dining-rooms and dormitories above and with a Mission Hall and class-rooms below. It was opened as the "Louisa Ashburton Mission."

The winter that followed was a hard one; the poor suffered great hardships. The new Mission was a refuge for many of the very poor of the neighbourhood, especially the children, who were, in measure, fed and cared for.

But the enterprise was not economically sound—a point of great importance to the caterer, who was always practical in his giving.

"Lady Ashburton squandered money away down there," he said. "Things got in a great muddle. At last she wanted me to take it over. But I couldn't do that. It had been kept going by charity. . . . She had done some good work."

After her death Ashburton House passed to the Missions to Seamen and to the London City Mission.

IV

A striking figure in the social history of the nineteenth century was the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who was indebted for her great fortune to the will of an actress, her grandfather's second wife.

The Baroness regarded that fortune as a trust, and the work of her life was—one of the most difficult of all tasks—to spend it wisely.

"She was always being fooled with her money," was the verdict of the practical man whose advice she sought more than once. She wanted to use her money to benefit the working classes of London without robbing them of their independence or self-respect. In many schemes she was a co-worker with the Earl of Shaftesbury.

On a piece of waste land called the Bird-Cage she built artisan dwellings.

She built and tried to establish the Columbia Market in Bethnal Green. Devoted to animals, she built stables for the costers' donkeys on the market estate. John Pearce described much of the building in the market as "cathedral work." The Baroness spent £200,000 on it, and it was a failure.

Sir Edward Sullivan was enthusiastic about the

scheme. It was to be a people's market, with everything—even a pawnshop—that the people needed.

"He wanted it to be a third-class Whiteley's. Buses were to run from all parts to bring workers to the market. He had an idea that I could put it right. Sir Edward thought that I could do the most absurd things! But markets make themselves. You can't make markets.

"One day I had a letter from her secretary asking me to go to see the Baroness. I was with her for an hour. She was a dear old soul. I hated to fail her. She seemed almost overwrought. She had been led to believe that I was a man who could do anything—in the market line. . . .

"The humbleness of that old soul! She talked to me as if we were equals. I shall never forget how she said, with tears in her eyes:

" 'I'd give the whole of my wealth if only I could permanently benefit the people. But I know that if I gave it, in a fortnight they would be back again where they are to-day.' "

When his managing director's report proved unsatisfactory, Sir Edward asked John Barker of Kensington to visit Columbia Market. John Barker—a sharp, brisk man—arrived, and met John Pearce there.

"What's this mad idea of Sullivan's?" he demanded.

John Pearce explained, and suggested: "Would you mind telling him what you think of it?"

"I will!"

After that he heard no more of the part he was to take in making a market that would not make itself.

CHAPTER XI

OUTSIDE CATERING

I

During the years he was connected with the company, the managing director had several experiences of catering for numbers outside the shops. The first was during the Dock Strike of 1889.

He had first visited Dockland when Sir Edward Sullivan's philanthropic scheme to provide the dockers with cheap meals had failed. He visited it again when the need for provision of food was more urgent than it had been then.

By the world outside the docker had been regarded as a man belonging to the most hopeless of the working classes. The casual docker was despised by the permanent one, and generally felt himself to be at war with the world, a slave of forces with which he could not cope. He felt that he was being cheated at every turn, but he did not know how to get fair play. He belonged to no organization. He wanted to live, just as other men

wanted to live, but his chances were poor. Many a day he waited for hours at the dock gates in vain. No man hired him. But the next day he waited again—for he could not live without work.

Unexpectedly in the summer of '89 he found that he was not alone. Thousands were with him, and at their head were men who had been working silently, preparing for a labour war.

There was the young man, Ben Tillett, restless, energetic, and ambitious, who had worked at the wharves and the docks. He had been investigating. There was, later, Tom Mann, who on his hands and knees had dragged heavy trollies along the dark underground passages of a coal-mine when he was a child. And presently there was John Burns, with a keen relish for a fight, who at ten had worked in a candle factory. These men understood the docker and his troubles. With these at their head the dockers were united and strong.

So the Dock Strike began. It was the greatest labour contest of that generation. Stevedores, lightermen, coal-porters joined the dockers. For more than a month the Port of London was silent. There were great processions—before boots were worn out. Fifty thousand men trudged

through the City, sometimes sombre and grim, sometimes with a laugh and a jest for the police, who sympathized with them, but there was no rioting.

The dockers were on strike. The Port of London was silent. Then hunger came near; starvation threatened.

It was a gigantic task that faced the leaders—to organize a commissariat for some two hundred thousand men, women and children. Committees of women in the different districts helped in the relief work, and many outside agencies contributed. At the relief depots long double files of women were lined up for hours. Men waited quietly three and four hours for a cup of tea and a piece of bread—hungry and patient.

John Pearce went down once more to Dockland. He saw "terrible suffering." He reported to Sir Edward Sullivan, and suggested how comparatively simple it would be for him to supply many meals without great cost. Sir Edward agreed to let him do as he liked. It was not a business transaction—nor a company's transaction. John Pearce organized and Sir Edward paid.

As a catering business increases, the cook's supply of "stock" grows richer. The director

ordered extra eighty-gallon coppers and many sacks of split peas, and his cooks made thick pea-soup. They filled railway milk-churns with the soup, and packed the churns closely together in covered vans so that the heat was retained. Another van was loaded with large chunks of bread.

The vans drew up on Tower Hill at midday. The back of each van was let down as they stood side by side, two feet apart. The hungry men filed up singly. Each took his ration of soup and bread, then passed on between the vans. Nearby were trestle tables for empty basins and spoons. There was no crowding and no rioting, and two thousand men were served.

The strike leader who was addressing his audience on Tower Hill lost his listeners—temporarily; but, in the estimation of John Pearce, the food, which many others besides himself helped to supply, saved the men from getting desperate.

While he was among the strikers he recognized many of his old Gutter Hotel customers, and they exchanged reminiscences of those so different days. He did not meet John Burns, the shaggy dark man who became the central figure of the strike, nor did he see his historic straw hat that "grew

grimier and grimier as the dockers' hands grew whiter and whiter."

II

A few years later he learned that his reputation as a caterer had come to the knowledge of some of the officers of Her Majesty's Army, and his advice and help were sought in connection with the soldiers' mess.

He had the unusual experience, as a civilian, of being consulted by those in authority on a matter concerning the Army.

For some time the soldiers had been openly grumbling about their food, and at last the officers had thought it worth while to take notice. Mr. Pearce received a letter from Whitehall asking him if he would meet Lord Methuen there. After discussing the subject, Lord Methuen asked him if he would visit the Army Service Corps at Woolwich, make an investigation, and report.

Mr. Pearce went down to see Colonel Collard, who was then in charge—"a good man, anxious about his men, but helpless to know what to do."

The two went round the barracks together,

inspecting the stores, the kitchens, the cooking, and the service. At the head of the catering department was a scientifically trained sergeant who had not troubled to apply his knowledge practically; the cooking and serving of the meals had been left to inexperienced soldiers, whose ideas of preparing a dinner did not go beyond putting a joint in the oven and leaving it there until a bugle sounded, and then roughly dishing it up.

Mr. Pearce was asked to take temporary charge. He was restricted to the use of stores already ordered, but he found that they were quite sufficient. He introduced his own cook, who had soldiers to work under him. With the ordinary supplies they obtained very new results and with an unusual economy. He remodelled the system, and provided a variety of fare that the men thoroughly appreciated. They liked toad-in-the-hole and meat puddings!

One day he received an unexpected token of this. He was walking round the barracks with the Colonel when the men who were standing about drew up, saluted, and cheered.

When Colonel Collard looked at his companion significantly, Mr. Pearce protested: "But that was for you, Colonel!"

"Oh no, it wasn't. The cheers are yours. They show you've been feeding them all right!"

Having organized the catering and taught the men, Mr. Pearce retired from Woolwich. Soon after he received a letter from Colonel Collard accompanying a pair of silver candlesticks from the officers. The letter contained a testimonial well pleasing to the caterer, whose work was his science, and his art, and his pride. It said: "I venture to assert that no soldiers in the British Army have such ample and varied meals as the five hundred of the Army Service Corps who are in mess at this station."

Lord Methuen, then in command of a battalion of the Guards stationed at the Tower, heard of the improvement at Woolwich, and thought that the same might be introduced elsewhere. Mr. Pearce was asked to visit him again.

After due inquiries, he offered to cater for the battalion for six months if he might select his own staff. He realized that a civilian at the head of a military staff would be greatly handicapped.

But before anything was settled he sensed feelings of antagonism. In his own homely phrase he "began to feel a draught. It was all very well for the men to shout to me, but the officers didn't like me. They tried to snub me as soon

as his lordship's back was turned. I'm glad they didn't accept my offer. I should have got into such difficulties."

III

Another occasion on which John Pearce provided for a number of officials was the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The Press had prophesied crowds even greater than those of ten years before, when sightseers, up from the country, had waited in the streets all night; when groups of sleepy-eyed patriots had boiled water in small tin kettles over tiny spirit stoves and had drunk tea in the streets in the very early dawn; when seats along the route were let for high prices and few had remained unsold.

London had the Jubilee fever a second time. It was all so exciting! For days the streets echoed to the noise of hammers and the rasping of saws. The route of the procession was transformed; whole fronts of houses had been taken out, the floors shored up and fitted with seats; balconies were covered with scarlet cloth.

And then doubt succeeded the fever. Everyone became afraid that everyone else would be there

and leave no room for him; so everyone went off to the country, and the anticipated crowds were thinned. Contractors who had erected stands at great expense lost heavily. Many of the seats remained unsold. Though the crowds were vast, there was room and to spare for everyone.

But the possibility of accidents remained and the certainty of hunger and thirst.

Along the route were the ambulance stations, each floating its small white flag with a Venetian Cross; and about the side-streets were the vans of Pearce and Plenty, ready with refreshments for the police. Their manager went about from one to the other with ease. He walked down the Strand, from van to van, and saw the procession without effort while he carried on his own particular "job." In his opinion, "The papers had made such a to-do, it was a frost altogether."

There was a different feeling abroad in August 1902, on the occasion of King Edward's Coronation. Two months before the route had been prepared, flags were flying, the streets were full of life, and—the King lay ill, perhaps dying.

A mass of superstition had gathered round the Prince of Wales, and many believed that he was destined never to come to the throne. When the

real Coronation Day came, two months later, it was shorn of something of its pomp though nothing of its gladness; with the lessened pomp there was, too, a lessening of the boisterousness and vulgarity that often appear to be the necessary accompaniment of public rejoicings.

The King gave dinners to numbers of children in different districts of London. The British Tea Table Company—as it had then become—was prepared to accept large contracts, and the managing director undertook many of the Coronation dinners, and personally superintended them, especially those in Shoreditch and Bethnal Green.

He was so busy catering for twelve thousand people on his great day that he could give no thought to royalty, loyal subject though he was. A fellow-caterer near by heard that the Duke of Connaught, with the Duchess and one of the Princesses, was in the neighbourhood, and he "tried to fall against him," as his colleague smilingly explained, but he himself was busy behind the scenes in his shirt-sleeves.

Suddenly appeared a major—much flustered.

"Mr. Pearce, put your coat on! The Duke's here! He wants to thank you!"

So Mr. Pearce wiped his hands, put on his

coat, and was—for the first, but not the last, time—presented to members of the Royal Family.

"And poor Thomas missed it!" he observed with a twinkle in his eyes.

IV

In the spring of '98 the practical, homely work of John Pearce was connected with seeming tragedy.

Each year the Pastors' College—founded at Newington Butts by C. H. Spurgeon—held its Conference of about six hundred past and present students. One of the features of the Conference was the popular College Supper, in the large room beneath the Tabernacle, that was attended by ministers, friends and subscribers. The only means of cooking on the premises was by an ordinary kitchen range, which was inadequate. Mr. Pearce had previously catered for the Annual Supper and was well known at the Tabernacle. One of the deacons visited Pearce and Plenty, where nearly all the food was cooked by steam. A facsimile boiler to the one introduced by John Pearce was put down in the Tabernacle kitchen and a long bent flue carried it to the top of the building.

On the day of the supper men and women were busy in the basement; other helpers were busy with the decorations of the supper-room and the preparation of the tables. No one suspected the sinister thing that was happening far out of sight.

In the College near by the morning session of the Conference was in progress. Presently from the windows men saw a volume of smoke, which grew thicker and darker. The lecture-room grew hot. The heat increased. The Conference was broken off. The men left quietly—to find a dense crowd in the highway before the building they loved.

The alarm had been given, but Spurgeon's Tabernacle—"the Cathedral of the Free Churches"—was doomed before the first fire engine could reach it. When the firemen arrived it was blazing fiercely. In less than an hour the roof fell in with a terrific crash.

Thousands in South London that day passed the charred ruin of the church—historic, though but thirty-seven years old.

John Pearce was afterwards twitted by his friends as being "the man who set the Tabernacle on fire." The cause of the catastrophe was a piece of roofing timber that—projecting into the flue

from the newly installed boiler—became overheated. The timber smouldered for many hours undiscovered before it broke out into flame.

Only a few, perhaps, could see with its pastor, Thomas Spurgeon: "The Tabernacle has not been burned down; it has been burned up. It has gone up in a chariot of fire."

CHAPTER XII

A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY

I

ALTHOUGH the managing director of the company formed in 1886 was not so happy nor so free as the simple proprietor of Pearce and Plenty had been, the new venture prospered and was at once a financial success. Fresh houses were opened.

"I couldn't go fast enough for them. They wanted to spend and increase their money. . . . After six months I was unhappy. A barrister was made deputy-chairman. We used to clash. . . . I went to Sir Edward Sullivan and told him I wanted to be released, but he wouldn't consent. . . . But he was always my friend."

The following year the business had increased to such an extent that a depot was required, with a separate clerical staff. Rooms were taken in Farringdon Road which became the registered offices of the company.

Though many new shops were opened, carefully supervised by the director and started under the

guidance of his wife, the provision was still for the man who could afford to spend only a few pence on his dinner. The average sum spent by each customer at a meal was seven farthings. If a boy or a man spent only a penny at Pearce and Plenty's he was entitled to sit down and to help himself to mustard, pepper and salt; and if he brought meat with him, he might borrow a knife and fork.

Yet the first dividend for the shareholders was at the rate of fourteen per cent.

For several years all the shops opened were of the same character, but at length the experienced director saw that there was a danger that their business would overlap. One day, meeting an old customer who had risen in life and no longer dined at Pearce and Plenty's, a new idea was suggested to him. He realized that there was a class of men who could afford to pay but little for their food, but could not afford—because of their strange caste creed—to dine with the "working man."

A journalist explained the situation when he said:

"I always send to Pearce and Plenty for my dinner. I daren't be seen there, but there's no better food in the City, and it's so cheap."

The director of Pearce and Plenty felt that if he could provide something a little better and hardly more expensive—or hardly less cheap—he would be supplying a need he had not before touched. The large restaurants that now cater for middle-class folk did not then exist.

He drew up a plan and took it to Sir Edward Sullivan as chairman of the company. But he was rebuffed.

"Don't try another class, Pearce. Keep to what you are doing. Open more Pearce and Plenty's. Don't get proud. Let's have all we can of a good thing."

But John Pearce knew that what he now wanted was also a good thing.

At last he was allowed to have his way, and in 1892 two houses in Aldersgate Street were taken, and were opened as the "British Tea Table." The new restaurant—well furnished and decorated—was soon crowded with customers. It suited the man who couldn't sit down with the bricklayer and the carman. It was a fashionable shop in that neighbourhood.

When its success was certain, Sir Edward and his colleagues gave it their adherence. A new company was formed with a capital of £300,000. Before long there were fifty-eight of these

better-class restaurants. The trade of Pearce and Plenty still continued to increase, and more temperance hotels were opened. These were the first hotels in London where a man could get a bed to himself, and attendance, for a shilling a night.

His work now differed greatly from that in the days when he put spoonfuls of potato by the side of a meat pudding and received fivepence in exchange, but it was no less arduous. He still began work at four in the morning. In market districts the houses were opened at that hour. He made a careful round of his shops. He did the principal buying. He took a personal interest in the men and girls employed. He was a strict disciplinarian, but the waitresses must have been well treated, for he received a dozen fresh applications every day from girls who wished to join their ranks. He made sure that the restaurants for the working men had their four new sawdust carpets every day. And then he worked—controlling with his brain the growing enterprise that he had started alone—in his office in Farringdon Road.

There one might have found him—in quieter surroundings than Lady Ashburton when she made her way through the hubbub of the shop,

desiring an interview—but hardly less free from interruption.

The visitor settles down for a "talk." Someone taps at the door. Urgent business. A long delay. . . . The managing director returns. The broken thread is picked up. . . . The telephone bell. . . . "Yes. . . . No. . . . At once! . . . Certainly. Good-bye. . . ." Another interruption. . . .

As he paces restlessly up and down the room the visitor understands that John Pearce has not retired to a position of ease. . . .

He considered the social life of his staff. Every July all the members of the staff went to Ramsgate for a day—without any expense to anyone. The excursion was arranged by the man who had learned thrift before he had learned to read. The entire cost was defrayed from the profits on the sale of the kitchen refuse—that was of use only as it was out of the way.

A glimpse of his homely interest is shown in words he used later at a meeting at Hoxton, when he was obliged to make a speech:

"There is something cheering about our business. We find, for one thing, a good many wives for our customers, and we always give them a cake when they get married. I fancy it's a mistake,

for every now and then, when I go into a house, the manageress will say, 'So-and-so is going to be married'; and I say, 'Bother her! What does she want to do that for?' I think the future husband ought to give us a cake!"

Many of the employees could boast of twenty, thirty, or forty years in the service of John Pearce. One of the depot superintendents said, as if speaking of a mother in her home:

"When the Guv'nor's in the place you can feel it. . . . It isn't the same place when the Guv'nor isn't there."

When one was heard to complain, "'e always sees the thing that's wrong," John Pearce responded with a smile: "That's what they pay me for."

If you asked a Welsh woman whose source of pride was the fact that she had been a member of the same Baptist Church as one of our Prime Ministers, "Do you know Mr. Pearce?" she would say: "Know him! I should think I do! . . . He's a splendid master."

A long record of service with Pearce and Plenty was a sure testimonial to industry. It was not the head who "drove," but the body of workers that set a standard that left no place for the lazy.

II

Sir Edward Sullivan lived for about eight years after the formation of the company, and during that time, although Mr. Pearce was handicapped in many ways as he had never been before, he could always count upon a loyal friend and know that behind him was a just man who trusted him completely.

Sir Edward was nominally chairman of the company, but in the estimation of Mr. Pearce he was "too big a man for it. He was not a company-monger."

In Lord Iveagh also—one of the principal shareholders—Mr. Pearce felt that he had a friend. He described him as "a quiet, nice, kind-hearted gentleman. It seemed to me wrong that he should be a brewer. I never met any dignitary of the Church who impressed me more than he did. . . . Many of those big men are fine—if only you get past their butlers! Or their secretaries—that's the biggest difficulty."

After Sir Edward's death the former deputy-chairman took his place. From that time life became increasingly difficult to the managing director. From boyhood he had fought his way up towards success. The fight had been hard,

but full of the fascination of a great interest. He had not encountered much enmity. After the launching of the Gutter Hotel he had not feared the failure of his work.

But now it seemed that he had fallen on evil times. Colonel Sir Henry Oldham—another of the directors—retired. The success of the company's houses was great, but in the reorganization of the company a latent spirit of antagonism developed, charged with envy against the man whose brains and hard work had secured that success.

In an hour of exasperation he resigned. Not very long afterwards the company failed—for the managing director had taken its best business brains with him.

It was a public company; there were many shareholders, and John Pearce still retained his shares. Long before any of those outside began to suspect, he knew that danger threatened. At that time he could have sold his shares for £3 2s. 6d. each, realizing a sum of £25,000, but he held them because he knew their real value.

When failure was practically certain and the knowledge was public property, he sold out—at sevenpence-halfpenny a share—to one who was willing to take a "sporting chance."

He was a born worker. He had worked long and hard. Perhaps it was time that he should rest. He had not meant to rest. He did not feel old at sixty. But he thought he was too old to start again.

CHAPTER XIII

STARTING AGAIN

"It was so much easier when John Pearce started," said the small man. "Nothing of the kind had been done. He was the first in that line. He couldn't do the same to-day; competition's too great."

Then he lit another cigarette, having satisfactorily explained the success of the man who, without education, without money, and without influence, had built up a new industry and won and lost fortunes.

"He couldn't do the same to-day," said the critic.

At sixty John Pearce saw "the end of that beautiful work." It fell in ruins. Then he started again, and built better than before.

When the shareholders heard of his resignation they protested. The British Tea Table without its founder would no longer be a safe thing for investors. They demanded his reinstatement. So he allowed his name to be put forward. When the result of the poll was counted John Pearce

had six thousand votes to the good; but the votes were thrown out by the lawyers. Some of the papers had not been signed in the right place; some had not been signed in the right way. His opponents had an equal number of faulty papers, but the scrutineers passed those and threw the onus of contesting the result in the Law Courts on John Pearce. He did not want a lawsuit. He gave in, and left the victors to their victory.

The victory was brief. The company began to fail. When it could no longer pay a dividend the shareholders turned the chairman and his nephew out. Unscrupulous men got hold of the business. The last chairman was sentenced at the Old Bailey to twelve months' imprisonment and his secretary to six, and the company went into liquidation.

John Pearce had looked on his shops with as great a pride as an artist looks on the picture that is his masterpiece; he valued them as a true writer values the books that are the best of himself. He saw "the end of that beautiful work" in dishonour.

But before that end came he had started again. He had enough money for all his needs. But soon after he had severed his connection with the company three of his sons left it, and then the

depot superintendent and a large number of the staff. These needed work. John Pearce felt himself under an obligation to find work for them. He was sixty. Catering was the only business he understood. He would start catering again.

He took premises in Holborn and opened the first J.P. Restaurant. After that he opened another in Newgate Street, and then a third in Fetter Lane. His sons, the superintendent, and the other members of his former staff were thus satisfactorily provided for, and John Pearce was as busy as ever at the work he loved.

Before long many who had been associated with the company in earlier days heard of his new venture. They wanted to join forces with him once more. The result was the formation of the J.P. Restaurant Company, and in a short time he was the proprietor of a number of establishments, all better than any of his former shops. When, later, the old houses, facing loss, appealed to him, he absorbed them all. Through the new company he purchased the thirty-three houses of the company that had failed. He took over the old site of the depot in Farringdon Road, and the Board Room of the old company became the Board Room of the new.

It was a joy to him to be at work again, especially

to visit his houses at dinner-time. He did not serve as in the old days, but while superintending he was just as keen that the service should be good. He was still busy in the market at 4 a.m., buying for cash; and between times he worked in his office in Farringdon Road.

John Pearce was always proud to remember from what he had risen. He wanted never to forget. He felt that he could serve the working man so long as he was willing to remember. He had catered for him at the beginning of his career; he would cater for him till the end. His new restaurants catered for "British Tea Table" customers who might wear silk hats. For the man who had dined at Pearce and Plenty's he opened the John Pearce Restaurants.

In four years he was directing seven John Pearce eating-houses and fifteen J.P. Restaurants, and serving more than a hundred thousand customers a week, with a daily menu that was one of the largest in London and prices that were the lowest.

Above the working man and the man in a top-hat was the merchant. And the merchant said:

"We like your food, but we can't come in with our typists."

So for them there was opened later the West-

minster Cafés, the highest type of restaurant evolved from the Gutter Hotel.

"People know I have come from the working class," Mr. Pearce explained. "That is something in my favour with the working man. But to put my name over a first class restaurant would be fatal. Even if I were giving Buckingham Palace fare it wouldn't go."

The line of catering which was initiated with the opening of the first Pearce's Coffee Bar in Aldersgate Street inevitably benefited many other trades. One pottery firm alone makes millions of cups and saucers and plates and mugs for coffee-taverns. The head of the firm said: "The movement has given a great impetus to our trade, both at home and abroad, for now it has become international, and the name of John Pearce is known everywhere as one of the leading pioneers."

From the beginning of his career he had been convinced that a man succeeds only as he personally attends to his job. It was by his personal interest that he won the loyalty of his large staff.

Newcomers sometimes found him an exacting master—he suffered no slackness. They dreaded to be sent for on account of some complaint about their work. The director was so tall and frightening! But when they got past their fear—when the

smile broke through his sternness—they found him wonderfully fatherly. Then affection was added to their loyalty.

In later days—when he is supposed really to have retired, but has not yet found the way—you may sometimes find him in his Café, sitting at a round table with a company of men—probably ministers, for they often congregate there.

They will tell you stories, while the tall man sits quiet, now and again smiling broadly at the activity of their imaginations. They ask you:

"Do you know what Mr. Pearce does if one of the dishes on the menu isn't going? He sits down at a table in the centre and orders it. Everyone sees him. They can't miss him! He enjoys that dish. Then everyone asks for a portion. So the cook gets rid of it."

And then:

"Always order what he orders. When he asks for apple-tart the waitress goes away and says, 'Apple-tart for Mr. Pearce.' You should see the plateful that arrives! Then we order apple-tart—a helping like his!"

"And do you know how he can feed you for sixpence a day——"

"And has he told you——"

The laugh and the story are tossed about the

round table, while the ministers are at play, and however cautiously you may accept what they offer, you have learned at least that the big, quiet man who started again at sixty is popular with them all.

CHAPTER XIV

CATERING AND TEMPERANCE—WITH SOME EXPERIENCES ABROAD

JOHN PEARCE had grown to manhood with a hatred of the drink traffic. His father and mother had both been strictly temperate, though the genus "teetotaller" was practically unknown in Hoxton. But after his father's death his uncle had shared their home. From that time Saturday nights became times of terror. The uncle was a violent man when he had been drinking, and often the boys hid themselves in fear to escape his brutal blows. As he grew older John hated to take part in any transaction that necessitated a visit to a public-house. His own fall, as a boy of thirteen, frightened him, and later Carter's tragic end made an indelible impression. "I never needed anyone to talk temperance to me," he said. "Carter had been to me a sort of god."

Temperance catering was a new adventure when he launched the Gutter Hotel. "At that time," he said, "men were driven to drink by the dirty coffee-houses and ever-open gin-shops."

His shops and his hotels were conducted on temperance principles. No employee was allowed any alcoholic drink on the premises.

In 1889 he joined the National Temperance Caterers' Association, which was active among caterers up to the time of the war, when changed conditions made inevitable some, at least, of the reforms for which it contended. Temperance catering is now so general that the work of the pioneer association has been largely forgotten.

Some of its chief leaders had died before the association came to an end. "They were splendid men and good speakers," said John Pearce. "There has not been such enthusiasm since. No temperance work is so keen, so alive, now. The laws have made things better. Catering helps people to be temperate. I remember the time when a business man would have been laughed at if he asked a man to have a cup of coffee with him. Now it is quite usual. Even on the Stock Exchange men will settle a bargain over a cup of coffee.

"There is a refreshment place in Throgmorton Street that you may see crowded at eleven o'clock. Not for recreation. The men are talking business over their coffee. Business transactions do not take place in public-houses now."

Before John Pearce resigned his position as managing director of the British Tea Table, the company wanted to introduce licences, but that was against the articles of association. He was the only total abstainer on the Board, but they could not introduce a licence while he was in office.

It seemed strange that after his break with the company, and when he considered starting again, he should immediately fix upon licensed premises. The first shop, in Holborn, had a full licence, which greatly increased its price. He took the shop and dropped the licence—at his own expense. The next, in Newgate Street, had a wine and beer licence; but again the owners—this time the City Charities' Corporation—agreed to accept a teetotal tenant.

But before these new ventures, while he was still a man under authority, he had an unexpected call to witness to the principles he professed. He felt proud, if nervous, when he received a letter from Viscount Peel asking him to appear before the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws at the House of Lords.

He had always contended that the public-house was a misnomer in that it did not supply a need, but rather created one; that the public-house, to

be true to its name, should provide food and not drink only. He met both enemies and friends when he faced the Commission. When he first entered the room he did not know which were which, but before long the tone of the questions enlightened him.

"Does your company undertake to supply the wants of the working classes in the way of refreshments?" asked Lord Peel, intent on discovering what he could of the scope of the working man's caterer.

"I think so, in every detail," was the reply.

A long interview of questions and answers followed. . . .

"Do you undertake to say that the business that you carry on is a legitimate form of supplying the public with victuals and drink without the addition of intoxicants and all the evils that I suppose you think come from them?"

"That is what I maintain. It was not accepted in 1879, when we put the first house down in Aldersgate Street. It was thought that such a thing was only a novelty and would not succeed. I suppose there is not ten per cent. of my customers that are total abstainers, but men come to us simply because they do not want to drink with their food."

"Is it your contention that the licensed victuallers do not supply a need among the public?"

"Yes. . . . It is the man who perpetually drinks that brings the great income to the publican; it is not the man that has a pint of beer with his dinner or supper."

"Do you think that the desire for drink is stimulated by the public-house?"

"Yes. We have a house in Bow Street, and there is a public-house at the side of it; men will go into the public-house as many as eight times during the morning, but they could not come into our place more than twice. They could not keep drinking tea and coffee to the extent that they can keep drinking alcoholic drinks. . . .

"We and other similar firms do more catering for men of all classes than used to be the case. When I was a lad I used to see men with their bundles with their day's food, but you very seldom see that now. The poorest is catered for. For instance, the average receipts in our 'Pearce's' is only seven farthings. Every day in the two companies we serve 70,000 meals, and it averages in the 'Pearce's' seven farthings per head per meal. . . ."

"Do you know cases of men bringing their

eatables with them and then going into a tavern for a drink?"

"I should say that does exist, but not to a very great extent now. When the old tap-room existed in public-houses, then men more often took their food with them and had their pint of beer with it; but I think our trade and similar trades have very materially done away with that."

Then at the chairman's request Mr. Pearce told something of his personal history, of his early struggles, of his hired barrow, and of the Gutter Hotel, which, he explained, "was such a primitive affair."

Then, returning to the subject upon which they had been interrogating him, the chairman asked:

"Is it your opinion that you attracted those who would have otherwise gone to the rum-and-milk shop?"

"That is so. I maintain I did that—so much so that the publicans put their heads together to try and get me away. They petitioned the police to have me removed, but some of the inhabitants near where I was standing took the other side, and petitioned the Commissioners, and in the end I was allowed to stand. . . ."

"It might be reasonable to suppose that work-

men flocked to your stall out of curiosity and then went to the beer-shop. Was that so?"

"I don't think so. I think that the stall was made attractive, and I did study it in every point, and I think I really weaned men from the public-house on their way. I do not think I made temperance men of them, but I think they looked for me being there, and they could depend on me being there in all weathers. . . ."

He told them of his first shops, of the first hotels, of the formation of the first company, of the second, and of their amalgamation, of their extension "from Upper Street, Islington, in the north, to Shaftesbury Avenue in the west," and the centres in the City.

"How many meals do you supply daily?" one asked him.

"We know to one in the British Tea Table, but we find it difficult to get a workman to acknowledge a check. . . . We say that we are serving 70,000 meals a day in the fifty-two houses. . . ."

"I suppose the point of all this is to show that you supply a want which the licensed victuallers do not?"

"That is what I maintain. . . ."

". . . I suppose there are trade advantages on the side of the licensed victuallers?"

"Yes. . . . This morning all our people are busy preparing for dinner-time. At Farringdon Street we have a staff of fifty persons. They are all busy preparing for twelve o'clock. A publican has it in his cellar all ready. It only wants pulling up by his engine or taps."

"You think you are victuallers and the others are licensed people to sell drink?"

"That is my contention. . . ."

"In short, the moral you draw is that the licensed victuallers do not supply a legitimate want . . . but force upon the public a trade which they do not really want?" It was hardly the best morning for his opponents to meet him, for he had been suffering from toothache and "was not too pleased." His replies became sharper.

"That is so. . . . The income of the publican is made out of the degradation of the people, not out of the legitimate trade of supplying food. If there was only a pint of beer in question I don't think I should have troubled to come here, because I don't think it would do the men harm, but . . . it is the perpetual drinker that makes the receipts for the brewer and the distiller. It is not the man having his pint with his dinner or his supper. . . ."

". . . You recognize there is room enough for

the publican's trade as well as for your own class of trade? . . . If the quantity is limited to the pint of beer you have nothing to say against it?"

"Nothing. I know very well there would not be room for all of them if they were selling only a pint or two of beer to each man in the City. I am sure they would not be required at each corner of the street. . . . From my point of view the only licensed victualler that fulfils what the law requires is at the country inn. There a man can pull up and get pretty much what he wants. . . . I think all that the London publican supplies is to make people thirsty—a dry biscuit and a piece of cheese, or something of the kind. . . . He has created a thirst in the men which he supplies afterwards. . . ."

"You must make an enormous profit, because you rent very expensive premises?"

"Yes. In Farringdon Street we pay £1,025 without taxes, but there we get 6,000 persons (a day). A very small percentage from each person would make a very good profit. . . . We serve six customers in Pearce's houses before the person that has capital in the business receives a farthing in dividend. . . ."

"You are somewhat hostile to the licensed victualler?"

"Considering that I was turned out at nine years old without much education and had to fight my way through life, through drink, naturally I would be."

The Dean, who was present, spoke of the suggested decrease of drunkenness, which Mr. Pearce could only accept with reservations. His experience showed him, in some places, an increase. But he contended that the establishment of cheap restaurants had much to do with the decrease of drinking in their neighbourhoods—restaurants run on commercial lines, he was careful to remind the Commission. He had seen too much of philanthropy divorced from business brains to have any faith in its efficacy.

When the questioning was over, the secretary followed him out of the room. "These Commissions are generally dull affairs," he said, looking cheerful, and related how earlier evidence had been overloaded with statistics. "We're pretty dull as a rule, but this morning you've given us a lively hour."

II

Although Mr. Pearce was never a speaker, and would do his best to avoid the public platform,

his homely common sense was always welcomed by the Caterers' Association, to which his gifts of money were a help and his practical experience was a source of strength.

In 1893 he was one of a number of delegates who were invited to attend gatherings in America for the purpose of discussing the various temperance movements in England and elsewhere.

His first experience of the sea was so unpleasant that when he was safely on the other side he said if only he had his wife there, and one coffee-shop, he would be quite content never to return.

But he was not prostrate during the whole of the voyage. On the fifth day there was a tug-of-war on deck. Germans so greatly outnumbered English on the Fuerst Bismarck that the patriotic Britisher, with his six-foot-three, felt that he must do his part for the honour of old England. So, forgetting sea-sickness, he rose to his height and helped to pull the opponents over the line.

His other memory of the voyage was a pleasant one—of the beautiful rendering of an Easter hymn sung by the German musicians on board.

As they came within sight of land, he looked towards the young unknown city, where the wealth of the world centred—the vivid, restless

city, with its energy and its sadness—and it was strange to him. He looked towards Coney Island, and saw the colossal Statue of Liberty, to which time and exposure had added beauty. It thrilled him. "This is the place where there is freedom," he said to himself.

His visit combined meetings with holiday and sight-seeing. The more oratorical members of the deputation spoke about Temperance Catering in their own country. John Pearce listened and looked about him. He saw "the temperance business pretty low down in America."

He visited New York, Cincinnati, Washington and Chicago. It was the time of the World's Fair, and Moody had started his great campaign in Chicago, determined to win many of the thousands who were flocking into the city for his Lord. He secured the large circus tent for the Sunday morning services, and five other great tent tabernacles were stationed at different places and moved from time to time.

The circus-men scoffed. "D'you think you'll get three thousand on a Sunday morning?"

On Sunday morning there were eighteen thousand, and Moody preached to them the Gospel and Sankey sang it. And the men of the circus wondered.

John Pearce spent a week at Moody's Institute in Chicago, and saw much of his work.

Many years before, a young couple had set out from London City very early on a Sunday morning on their way to the large wooden hall at Bow erected for the American evangelists. The young folk had two big babies to carry, and the babies were heavy, but they carried them cheerfully, for Moody and Sankey were at the end of the road.

Moody's work had grown since those days. His experiences as an evangelist, and his difficulty in finding those who were competent to help inquirers, had led to the opening of the Bible Institute in Chicago, with accommodation for about three hundred students.

The Institute was open to both men and women. Some of the students were uneducated; most of them were poor. Some were pastors of the churches seeking to increase their practical experience—for there was wide scope in Chicago. The Institute was undenominational, and the religious opinions of the students were diverse; but they found a common centre in their keenness for Bible study and their unquestioning faith in prayer.

The work of the Institute, which was primarily

the training of evangelists, was work close to the great evangelist's heart.

The student's day began early, with breakfast at seven o'clock, but to the visitor from London that early hour was late. He could not stay long in bed, even though no market called him. On the first morning of his visit he was down so early that he was all alone. He had not yet met the famous preacher, but while he was sitting in the vestibule D. L. Moody appeared.

He sat down beside John Pearce and said at once, in his short, crisp way: "Your friends tell me you have a story."

His visitor suggested that it was a very humble one.

"I want you to come to speak to my students this morning." The request was a command. Not heeding the attempted protest, the evangelist added: "These men are poor. They've come here to learn how to serve God. Your story'll help them to take hold."

"But you don't know me," John Pearce reminded him.

"I don't want to. Tell them your story for the glory of God."

"I should shake from head to foot," protested the man who had never faced a company of students.

"Never mind your shake!" retorted Moody, without sympathy. "Go right along and tell them."

And after breakfast John Pearce went.

How could he get in touch with these keen young Americans? He searched his memory. The only American business transaction that he could find there was the purchase of the American ham-box from which he had constructed his first coffee-stall. That ham-box connected him with America!

He used it. He told his story in his own way. Having established the connection, he told the story of Stratford Place, of the builder's yard, of Covent Garden, of the Gutter Hotel, with glimpses of the things not seen. The story was a success. More than one found in it a new inspiration.

Many of the men who went to the Institute worked between the classes for money to pay their fees. Some even blacked the boots of visitors —in Chicago a task usually performed by coloured servants.

The morning after his extemporaneous address the speaker went downstairs and found that a young Irishman had been deputed to do that service for him. He stood with his foot on a box while the student cleaned his shoes.

"The devil generally takes a lot of sitting on before I can do this job," the young man said; "but your story's made things look different. I was going to give up. I'd lost heart. But I've started afresh this morning."

During his stay at the Institute Mr. Pearce saw as much as he could of Chicago. He pronounced it "most evil—too bad to talk about."

One day, on his return from the city, Moody met him.

"Wal, what d'you think of Chicago?" he asked in his crisp Yankee way.

John Pearce said what he thought, without subterfuge. It offended the brusque evangelist.

"Wal, what d'you expect?" he demanded. "Chicago's a mushroom growth. It's the refuge of every evildoer. We haven't your emigration laws. But you wait——"

Moody loved Chicago; the burden of its sins and its sorrows was his.

Before returning to England John Pearce saw the Niagara Falls. He had only a short time at Niagara, to his regret, but the impression of the mighty Falls, as he gazed on them from the Canadian side, was deep and lasting. The memory remained one of his unforgettable treasures.

He had been thrilled by the Statue of Liberty

as the Fuerst Bismarck had entered New York Harbour, but when a few weeks later he sighted the Southampton coast once more, he said:

"This is my country. I'll never leave England again."

III

At the time of the Great Exhibition—when the Eiffel Tower was erected—Mr. Pearce paid his first visit to Paris. A scheme had been under discussion for providing temperance catering in connection with the Exhibition, but the idea of temperance catering was not popular with the authorities. Mr. Pearce offered to find £1,000 for the unusual experiment, if proper accommodation could be provided. His offer was not accepted, and the scheme fell through; but the conference of French and English temperance reformers was, in the judgment of those who took part in it, well worth while.

In the summer of 1903 he visited Germany, where, in Bremen, a large and representative gathering of temperance workers met to consider, among other things, the best possible counter-attractions to the beershops. On that visit the practical temperance reformer broke through his usual habit of silence, and in Bremen Town Hall

spoke for thirty or forty minutes, in English that was translated by an interpreter. "I'm all of a flutter before I begin, but when I'm started I'm all right," he said. "I have to feel a thing before I can speak. When I have something that's on my soul I take a lot of putting down."

During the week of meetings he was the guest of a German merchant who had "a beautiful place" in Bremen, and he experienced German hospitality at its best. The merchant had a son in London, and "he couldn't do enough for" the man who had come from London and could talk to him of the life of the City.

He saw the strength of Germany—in the quiet, simple homes that the hurried visitor never enters. He admired the "very home-loving people," the intelligence of the women, the friendliness of the men. He was impressed by their industry. He saw no loungers standing idly about the streets. He saw the labourer start off with his wife and family on Saturday afternoon, clean and happy, ready to enjoy their holiday together. He admired them.

And then he saw evidences of a power that seemed strange to him as an Englishman. Wherever he looked he saw—the military. Its shadow touched every section of the community.

An American a few years later wrote: "There are more eyes with dreams in them in Germany than in all the world beside." John Pearce did not notice the eyes with dreams in them; he did not meet the philosophers, the musicians; but he did see soldiers.

One evening the temperance advocates had an "off night," and their host offered to take several of them to the Hippodrome. Their experience was unexpected. Mr. Pearce described it:

"We went into a sort of dress-circle, about three rows from the front. We sat talking low in English before the curtain went up. Presently some officers came in with their ladies and took seats in front of us. Very soon we realized that they didn't like us there. Two of them stood up and faced us and began to jabber away. I couldn't understand them, but I was told they objected to us talking English. That gave me some idea of what was brewing for England. . . .

"Another night we were coming back from the Town Hall about eleven. An officer was in front of us. As he passed the sentry-box we saw the sentry's face. He seemed terrified at the officer."

He saw many well-groomed officers, alert and disciplined, but that impressed him less than the subservience of the private soldier and the im-

passable gulf between the officers and the middle and lower classes.

One free morning his host suggested a ride. The boy who had done many odd jobs in the process of "bettering himself" had been used to horses. He had fed them; he had ridden them; he had taken them to the blacksmith when they had to be shod. John Pearce, at fifty-six, felt quite at home with a horse. It would be good to ride one of the best-bred horses in the world.

But the German horse had never had such a rider on his back.

"As I stood beside him, he turned his head and looked at me. When he saw that I was so long he seemed scared. He bolted before I could get on."

The horse did not understand English, so took no notice of the Englishman's call. He was enticed back in the language that he understood, and at last allowed the tall foreigner to mount.

From Bremen Mr. Pearce went to Cologne, and there, too, he found the military.

One evening he went into one of the beer-halls, where coffee and beer were served. He sat down and looked about him, mentally comparing English and German catering. "This place would never

go in England," he decided. "People would want something more substantial."

He was brought back from his practical considerations by "such a scuffle. Every man in the hall was on his feet. An officer wearing a great cape and in full military dress was stalking down the aisle. Everyone stood till he took his seat. I don't wonder at war breaking out. The country was so full of militarism there was no room for anything else. It was appalling."

But he admired the Germans—the "very home-loving people."

CHAPTER XV

CATERING IN WAR-TIME

I

ANY true history of the war must find a place for the men and women who never went to the Front, who were not supposed to be doing anything heroic, but who, biding "by the stuff," did the work of two, three, or four men to the limit of their powers. Among these, few could have been more harassed than the London caterer, especially the caterer for the civilian working men and women; for, however impartial the law, experience proved that the West suffered less than the East when it came to the rationing of food.

Punch had a word to say for the cook at the Front:

The company's cook is no great fighter,
And there's never a medal for *him* to wear,
Though he camps in the shell-swept waste, poor blighter,
And many a cook has "copped it" there;
But the boys go over on beans and bacon,
And Tommy is best when Tommy has dined,
So here's to the cookers, the plucky old cookers,
And the sooty old cooks that waddle behind.

Some of the cooks who stayed at home, and were not sooty, were no less plucky.

It was not until 1916 that the Government took over the control of the food, and ration cards came into being. Though State control of food might be regarded as an evil in time of peace, there was a popular demand for it in the time of war, when the people realized the growing shortage of supplies.

The soil was impoverished through lack of fertilizers; thousands of acres of farm-land had become the camping-grounds of troops; farm hands had been called up; the Army made heavy demands on the stock of oats and hay; and the liberal scale of Army rations and the shrinkage of refrigerating space on ships increased the meat shortage among civilians. Prices rose. The public grumbled. Worried days and nights were the portion of those at the head of the Food Control. Worried days and nights were the portion of the caterers for the people.

It is humiliating to realize how tremendously important food appears when it is not. By the spring of '17, although tragedy was abroad and at home, the question of food production and distribution seemed for a time to dominate all others. In the House of Commons

it was a continual subject of debate. Among housewives it was the continual subject of discussion.

John Pearce was seventy, but he was doing the work of many men. The cream of his staff—as he called them—had been taken: his cooks, to be bakers in canteens, the women to make munitions. Among his temporary staffs he found the biggest thieves he ever knew. He had been used to happy relationships with his employees, but these men and women who came and went were out of control. "I was so hung up sometimes," he said, "that I didn't know what to do. Everything I used was by permission, and we couldn't get enough to supply our customers. I even tried to make fish sausages, but they were suspicious of them."

The food troubles brought out smiles, too, and one learned to do many things: to drink tea without sugar; to eat margarine without complaining, and bread that appeared to have been kneaded on a dusty floor without examining it too closely; to stand in a queue or go short of rations; and the caterer, who had been used to ordering frequent consignments of twenty and more tons of sugar, went about with a metal box in his pocket holding three little pieces!

He learned to do many things, but never to take saccharine.

"The authorities worried me so," he said, as we talked of those strange war days. "There was many a jack-in-office who knew nothing; a draper who had the ordering of coals—and so on. An auctioneer was set over the food, and he lorded it over me. It was the man with the biggest swank that got the job.

"One day, when everything was quite a worry, I heard that there was a consignment of frozen meat from abroad that you could buy without a permit. I was offered three tons of frozen fillets of beef, in boxes. I went to see them. They turned out like blocks of ice. But I was glad to have them. I'd been at my wits' end. So I bought them and had them carted home and put in our cold storage.

"We began to use that meat next day—chopping it up and making it into sausages, and using it in whatever way we could.

"A few days after an inspector came over to the shop, very excited and alarmed. He said I must stop using that meat. I ought not to have had it. I must wait for a permit. I should hear.

"My man had got half a ton already chopped. He wanted to know what we were to do for meat if we couldn't use that. I thought it might be all

right next day. But next day we heard nothing. So I said: 'We'll use what's chopped.' We used that up, and then we were in a corner again. I hadn't heard anything.

"Then I risked it, and used it all.

"I didn't hear anything until three months after, when I had a letter from the Food Controllers saying they could not give me permission."

"You're not afraid you will be prosecuted if that secret comes out now?" I asked him.

His eyes twinkled.

"If I am, I'll take it, and have a rest."

"Shall we risk it?"

"Well, I may have offended a good many times, and that would be the first time I got copped."

In those days he was catching a train every morning at 6.10, working all day, and many nights attending tribunals to try to get his men whom he needed. He had fifty-three houses to keep going, and the Government had taken all his cooks. As well as for his own shops he was catering for ten thousand at a small-arms factory at Enfield Lock and a similar factory at Woolwich, and he often had to go to these places, where they were working day and night—where midnight dinners of hot roast pork, roast beef,

puddings, and other war-time luxuries had to be provided.

Working as a caterer for the Government he came up against enmity and jealousy such as he had never known while he was his own master. At the factories another problem—though a lesser one—also worried him: how to provide meals to time when the fires were damped down and the lights put out at every warning of a raid.

II

From the time that the first Zeppelin came over and dropped bombs on London, a new anxiety was ever present with employers who felt their responsibility towards those whom they employed. Mr. Pearce had a written notice sent to every one of his shops, instructing the workers where to go in the event of a raid. Every shop was to close its doors if the enemy came.

On the Saturday morning that saw the worst of the daylight raids, when the German planes came in massed form, three of his places were blown up.

He had a horse and brougham, and he immediately started a round of his shops. All the telephones were stopped. He went into a shop that

had been wrecked. The women had followed the written instructions, and when a bomb crashed through the glass dome they were safely out of reach, but they were so unnerved that they screamed when they were spoken to. There was no loss of life among his indoor workers, but the coachman who had driven his brougham was never seen again. Among the cigarette workers next door the destruction was terrible.

He saw the dead being taken away in omnibuses. The bombs must have contained poison, for everything around was saffron-coloured, and there was much sickness among those whom the bombs had not touched. Many of the women in the streets were as if they were mad. Horses wandered loose in the City. Boys left to mind them were lost.

Some years later, in a day of peace when war was rumbling in the distance, and talk of war was all around, he said fiercely: "I feel as if I could kill anyone who wants war!"

While he was working day and night—while three of his sons were at the Front and his only daughter was away—his wife's nerves broke under the strain, and she was taken away to Tunbridge Wells.

One day, leaving his work, he hurried off to

Kent to visit her and take her some things that she needed. When he returned late at night—having had no food all day—he found his house empty. The three maids had robbed him and left.

Many a night, after a day of conflicts, he returned late to an empty house. Many a night he shut himself in his room feeling that he should go mad. But he fought his way through, and kept on working.

A little later—while there was still more than two years of war ahead—his wife died.

Then John Pearce was more alone than he had ever been before.

CHAPTER XVI

PREACHERS AND PASTORS

I

To John Pearce the life of faith is a reality. The success of his enterprises, the courage that overcame one obstacle after another, the joy—increasing—in the wonder of life, had their source in the faith that was born one night in a Mission, in the company of the rough unwashed—the faith that grew strong enough to stand the storms of more than sixty years.

From the day of his marriage his church life, his home life, and his work life intermingled. In his church he found the source of inspiration for his work; he received the benediction on his home.

He used to pray about every thing—even the smallest. He had no doubts. The habit of prayer continued through the years. When he was past middle life he was still regularly attending a Saturday evening prayer-meeting, and he confided to a band of teachers whom he entertained in

the country one summer day, "Without that I couldn't live."

From the first he took a share in the work of the community into which he had been reborn—"Victoria Hall, Union Street, Friar Street, Blackfriars Road." How many thousand times he repeated those names, until he said them in his sleep, in the days when the young men of "The Band" gave the invitation to the Mission, and were often received by the hearers with a shower of cold water.

He fancied that William Booth got many of his ideas for the "Army" from Carter's Mission in Southwark—ideas which he enlarged and developed with the help and inspiration of his wife.

In the early days of their work John Pearce often went to Mile End Waste to hear William Booth and "his wonderful wife." His verdict was: "General Booth was a great man, but Catherine Booth was, I think, a greater woman. She was a powerful woman. Without her it is possible there would never have been a Salvation Army.

"They and their followers had an awful time. Some of the roughs banded themselves together, and were known as the Skeleton Army. The Skeleton Army attacked the Salvation Army. I

have seen the lasses with the blood streaming down their faces when stones had been thrown.

"I wouldn't like to be a Salvationist," he said later. "I don't like their services. They have no worship, as I know it. They come nearest to God in their Holiness Meeting; but they have such noise and excitement, I couldn't bear it."

But all through his life John Pearce has contributed to the funds of the "Army" and taken an interest in its working.

In the Mission he had found the new life he sought, and while Carter was in his prime, he wanted no other spiritual home. When two hundred converts from the theatre services were in communion, forming a Church, many desired to be baptized—in the New Testament way, by immersion. A baptistery was built at the Victoria Hall. It was built by some of the men themselves in a week. But John Pearce was not among those baptized there.

When, after Carter's death, he found himself transplanted among the "Brethren" he was not so happily at home. Perhaps his ideas were broadening. After he was excommunicated—because he attended a scientific lecture at the time of the week-night service and would not repent—he made his way to broader spaces.

He discovered the great preacher at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. With Mrs. Pearce he joined the Church there, and was there baptized by C. H. Spurgeon.

He never knew his first Baptist pastor intimately; the Church at the Tabernacle was too large for many individual friendships. John Pearce, who kept out of the way of the great, never put himself in the way of the preacher, who was surrounded by people wherever he went, but even at a distance he felt the force of his personality. He was impressed by his joviality, by his vitality, and—perhaps most of all—by his readiness of speech. For that John Pearce envied him.

He saw thirty people waiting round the baptistery in the crowded Tabernacle. He watched the preacher go from one to another giving "the right hand of fellowship" and the word of welcome. He heard a fresh word for each. There was no repetition, and each welcome had the ring of sincerity.

That tramp of the people to the Tabernacle on Sundays! Even a seat-holder was thankful if he might have a seat on the steps if he was not there ten minutes before the time of the service. He considered himself fortunate if he did not have to stand—in that building that held five thousand people.

As his pastor, C. H. Spurgeon often helped John Pearce in difficult times, and now and then he spoke a heartening personal word. Once when he stopped to talk with him, John Pearce confessed: "I sit here sometimes and solve my business problems while you preach. I can't concentrate on the sermon."

The preacher laughed at the frank confession. Perhaps he found it refreshing. The honest occupant of the pew explained that there were times when he could not keep his mind still. "Things would keep bobbing up." The great preacher agreed that it was good that a man should find the solution of his problems in the sanctuary —even though he could not listen to the sermon.

But except for those worrying times when "things would keep bobbing up," John Pearce was a true sermon-lover. When he was over eighty he would talk of some of the sermons he had heard, preached by Talmage, Newman Hall, and others, who drew crowds to Wesley's Church in City Road when he was a boy, and while he was the hard-working proprietor of the Gutter Hotel.

He could remember the text that Newman Hall took, when he preached the Sunday-school sermon from Wesley's old pulpit seventy years

before. "But if you asked me last Sunday's I should have to stop and think."

He did not appreciate that sermon. He was only a child, and his impression of the preacher, who had a great following and whom many considered great, and greatly loved, was the critical impression of a sharp and unbiased child. "I thought he was a dandy. There was a maroon-coloured cushion with tassels in front of the pulpit. Newman Hall wore black gloves and hung his hands over the cushion. I thought he was thinking of himself. That did for me."

Yet he remembered the text of the sermon, scathingly critical boy though he was.

He remembered Talmage, too. When the American preacher came to Wesley's Church the crowds were so great that those who could not get in filled the forecourt, where stands Wesley's statue with his own words beneath, "The world is my parish." The preacher understood the people to whom he was talking. They were working people, men and women whose days were drab. He told them: "They shall share alike. As his share is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his share be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall share alike." How he encouraged them! The lad who listened appreciated that.

"You women who stay by the wash-tubs, you're going to receive as much as I receive." A verdict that made life's inequalities more bearable and less unfair.

John Pearce was a member of "Spurgeon's Tabernacle" for about eighteen years. After he moved his home from Clapton to Dulwich, he generally walked to the Tabernacle every Sunday morning, and to the much nearer Baptist Church in Chatsworth Road in the evening. After the Tabernacle was burnt down he became a member at Chatsworth Road, and there he has spent the rest of his Church life.

At Chatsworth Road, West Norwood, Archibald G. Brown was gathering growing congregations. He was winning the people by the preaching of truths he had learned from C. H. Spurgeon and expounded in a vivid, homely fashion that was all his own. "Are you saved?" demanded this big, bright-eyed man who looked like an old soldier. "Have you been converted?" Echoes of a bygone day; of John Wesley, of C. H. Spurgeon; the note of William Booth and of William Carter—men who saw things happen. John Pearce was at home with such preaching. And he found in Archibald Brown a pastor with whom he could be intimate, one who became a

constant visitor in his home. He discovered that they had much in common. They went for holidays together. They came in touch with each other's inner life.

"The great thing about Archibald Brown was his reading of the Word," said his friend long afterwards. "He was a wonderful expositor. You couldn't forget what he said. The seed-thoughts he gave more than twenty years ago live with me. They grow as I read the Bible now.

"I once told him what I thought of his expositions. He told me he spent more time over them than over his sermons.

"But what most impressed me about him was that in the depths of trouble he could appear to the public as a light-hearted man. He could laugh when his heart was breaking.

"Once when I was in great trouble he came to me. He just put his hand on my shoulder and said: 'If it helps you, Pearce, I understand.' I knew that he did.

"He told me that the happiest ten years of his life were spent at Chatsworth Road. He left the church there because he wanted to occupy Spurgeon's pulpit."

To Archibald Brown, C. H. Spurgeon was the Prince of Preachers. He was proud to be in

his succession in the Tabernacle that had been rebuilt.

In the minister who followed him Mr. Pearce found another friend. He was always fortunate in his pastors. He did not have one who was not vitally alive and intensely individual. And he had no experience of empty churches.

In D. J. Hiley he found extremes, the variety that banishes boredom. He described the burly Welshman—known and loved in his mining village of Risca as "David John"—as "the man with the great heart. . . . He is the man who appears his best when you are in trouble. . . . You upset David John and you've got something to deal with. He can cry over you and he can annihilate you."

He came to know his new pastor well, and to love him—the man who could be such a big friend and such a dangerous opponent, especially if one dared to belittle the Church he loved; the man who, in his own words, "never gave a man a dog's chance if he whined," but who could waken a crowd to delighted laughter, then in a moment bring it to silence and the tribute of tears.

To some, D. J. Hiley, with the voice of the iconoclast, appeared a son of thunder. John Pearce,

like many others, found there was in him another man—a man enshrined in the story of which he is so proud.

For fifteen years D. J. Hiley had been minister of the historic Baptist Church at Broadmead, Bristol. After standing for two hundred years, the building that had echoed to his preaching for fifteen collapsed on one side—as the walls of Jericho fell at the blast of the trumpets.

When the wall was rebuilt, the people suggested adding a window as a tribute to the work of the minister they loved. D. J. Hiley suggested that he would be as much at home in a glass case as in a stained-glass window. Whatever kind of saint would they choose to represent "David John"?

Some time after, being in Bristol, he made his way to Broadmead alone. He went alone into the dark, empty church. He stole up the aisle of the gallery he knew so well, searching the wall with the aid of his flashlight.

When his torch at length revealed the window he sought, he stood amazed before the most beautiful tribute he had ever received.

Above his name was the pictured saint: "Barnabas—a son of consolation."

A man with a heart of tenderness for those who suffer; a man with a big heart of love for

little children; so do John Pearce and those who know him best know D. J. Hiley.

In the hall of his home at Dulwich John Pearce hung the portraits, in oils, of his three pastors—C. H. Spurgeon, Archibald Brown and D. J. Hiley. One night he had to take a meeting, and was feeling very worried. He did not know whatever he was to say. Instead of brooding or searching for an inspiration, he set to work to clean the pictures. When, later, he faced his audience he told them he had been cleaning up three of the greatest pastors of the land. That gave him a good start.

Speaking in public was the last thing he ever wanted to do. His life of faith required some other form of expression—such as feeding the hungry, giving "treats" to the children, gifts to the aged and the blind, and hospitality to lonely ones—young pastors up for the annual "Feast of Tabernacles," Canadian soldiers from the Front, refugees from Belgium. He is not a man to give away a sovereign if it is going to take fifteen shillings to distribute it, but he loves to give direct; to pay the weekly rent for some who might claim a relationship; to pension others; to provide special Christmas gifts for widows; to send every week for some of the poorest children of Hoxton

parcels of groceries and provisions—remembering his hungry boyhood.

His love for children grew with the years. When it was suggested that he should allow a portrait of himself to be painted and presented, he asked that instead something should be given for the little ones. The answer to his request was the John Pearce cot in Queen's Hospital for Children in the Hackney Road.

It was through the children that he became known as the "Chocolate Man." For thirty years the tall man has sat during the Sunday morning service in the widest pew he could find, his pockets filled with packets of chocolates for the children. After the service he has distributed the chocolates, and often received kisses in return. One little girl used to put her arms round him and give him "a rare hug." But she grew up. She did not know when she ought to leave off giving kisses for the chocolates she still enjoyed.

He has found so many things in his life that suggest thankofferings. They have kept him busy. The new hall at Chatsworth Road, built during the ministry of Archibald Brown, was largely his gift. For nearly thirty years the deacons' meetings were held in his house. Every month about twenty of the officers of the church, with their pastor,

accepted his hospitality. After the business had been strictly attended to, refreshments and smokes were provided. Understandings were generated in the social atmosphere and friendships cemented.

When Mr. Hiley left to go to the north of London, Mr. Pearce resigned his position as deacon at Chatsworth Road. He felt that it was time that he should leave church management to younger men. But he welcomed the new minister, the Rev. H. J. Galley, whom he found in the succession of the "old-fashioned preachers, with the old-fashioned preaching for conversions." Though he was no longer on the diaconate, his hospitality was unchanged, and still he welcomed pastor and deacons every month to his home, and still he found the services a strength and an inspiration.

Ministers besides his own he has known; some of them he has loved. First among those stands Dr. Fullerton—evangelist, preacher, friend. John Pearce remembers the days when the tall young student left college and went out from the Tabernacle to travel up and down the country with Manton Smith, the evangelist of the silver cornet. He remembers the "great stir" they made. He remembers W. Y. Fullerton preaching in the

Tabernacle, in C. H. Spurgeon's pulpit. He remembers his sermons and his stories. Years after he reproduced a good story, and the outline of the sermon in which the story came, for the benefit of the preacher, who had forgotten both.

Genial, warm-hearted and brotherly, whether he is telling stories, or buying toys from the hawkers in Holborn, or preaching in the Tabernacle, or being entertained in Congoland, Dr. Fullerton is altogether human.

"I think he is the greatest man I have ever met," is the affectionate verdict of his friend John Pearce.

At the round table in the bright café in Holborn—great-great-grandchild of the Gutter Hotel—where ministers often lunch, they look for W. Y. Fullerton. "The customers seem lost if he's not at the table," said the man to whom he is "the greatest."

Several times he met Dr. Joseph Parker, the preacher who gathered from every country the congregations that filled the City Temple. John Pearce felt that he was a man to be envied. He had such power of language; he was so strong.

Sometimes he slipped in to the Thursday morn-

ing service, where for an hour hundreds of City men forgot that they were of the City as they listened to the magic eloquence of the orator who had been born the son of a stonemason.

One morning, during the service, he was astonished to hear a reference to himself. Dr. Parker had read in a magazine an article on the work of the working man's caterer. From that article had grown a sermon on "The Socialism Jesus taught," and it contained a fragment of the story of John Pearce.

Some time afterwards it was given to him to see another side of the man whom he had been tempted to envy for his power.

One Thursday morning he received a message asking him to go to see the preacher. He found in the vestry a broken man, "so lonesome, so desolate, so helpless," for the loss of his life's great comrade. Intruding into his sorrow had come the fretting worries that remorselessly attack the man left to take care of himself—such worries as John Pearce himself knew later, when he too had lost his wife.

The preacher was pacing feverishly up and down the room. He was near to losing his control.

"My housekeeper is robbing me. . . . I don't know what to do."

The positions of the two men seemed to be reversed. John Pearce took command.

"Don't worry about the housekeeper," he said, sure of the procurability of efficient women. "I'll help you."

Dr. Parker gripped his hand.

"How great you are!" he exclaimed.

John Pearce great! And able to help Joseph Parker! After a talk together, he left—wondering.

"I had envied the big man, and yet he let little things worry him."

But that hour of little worries that grew big was not far from the dark hour in which Joseph Parker, the spiritual captain, confessed that he "became almost an atheist"—the hour in which, he said, he became an old man.

John Pearce saw him in his hour of weakness, as he had seen him in the hour of power. The weakness passed. Not long after his great bereavement he preached his vivid sermon on "Partial Faith." "I am not so old in faith as mighty Habakkuk," he said. . . . "I leave the creed to the changing language, but my faith I never put into any custody but Thine own heart, Thou Father-Mother God, Thou King of the Stars!"

When Joseph Parker, too, went out, he went

triumphant. The multitude whom he had inspired knew that he had gone to God.

II

John Pearce, at eighty-one, loves to talk of the ministers he has known and of those early days when he found a new meaning in life.

"I wish I could experience those blessed times of reality now," he says, unconsciously echoing the chorus of the saints. "I wish I could have the same simplicity now."

Then his face wrinkles into a wry smile. "I thought every minister was a man of God. If I'd known then what I know now I should have had a fit. It was a good thing I didn't. . . . It's a good thing that the young convert doesn't know the hypocrisy there is even in the Church. I'm glad I took up Church work when I was young. . . .

"As a young man I felt the danger of the unsaved man sitting next to me," he said reminiscently. "Nowadays you're not responsible for your neighbour. He'd resent your speaking to him about eternity. We're all too jolly respectable. I'm not blaming others. I've altered myself. It's the spirit of the times. . . . We used to have to fight for our religion. It needed some pluck. Now

no one persecutes you; no one bothers to criticize you; no one cares.

"We used to talk of 'the fear of God' and 'conviction of sin.' A man had to choose between heaven and hell. Those first preachers I knew were not intellectual preachers, but they knew their Bibles. Many nowadays lack conviction. They don't believe the truth of the Scriptures they preach. . . . There won't be another revival until we get back to realities.

"The minister has my sympathy. It must be terribly hard for him to carry on. It is so difficult to get men to respond. . . . But in every denomination there are crowded churches where men are preaching the old truths."

And his thoughts go back to "the old truths" taught by "the men of God"—truths that he had found vital enough to stand the test of worldly knowledge, of disillusion, and of loss.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CATERER ON HOLIDAY

I

JOHN PEARCE was over forty before he ever had a whole week's holiday. His honeymoon was the first real holiday of his life. During that unforgettable week-end he stayed with his bride at quiet Southend, in a cottage with a garden in front. On Monday evening they returned to London, to begin a busy life together.

For some years after that great event their chief outings were to Epping Forest—holidays of a day. Once or twice they went to the Forest for the week-end. They had only one room. "But what a joy to wake to hear the bells on the cows. So different from Hoxton. No rich man going to Monte Carlo could know that joy."

Then they ventured farther, and took their family to Ramsgate, to spend four or five days on the sands. The family had increased so unhaltingly that a roll-call was necessary before the parents could start for the climb that preceded every

dinner and tea. Generally there were one or two who had to be carried. Those holidays were not altogether lazy ones.

The first time he took a month away from his work was when he went to America and combined temperance propaganda with sight-seeing. He was never a reader, but he was always observant, and he had a wonderful memory. He never imagined that his education was finished. When, after forty, he was able to take holidays abroad, he felt he was in the way of finding the "enlightenment" he had not been able to get from books.

He was awake to beauty, but he could not feast on beauty without human interest. One August he went to Porlock Weir with his pastor, Archibald Brown. They stayed in a fisherman's cottage by the harbour. While Mr. Brown and his son went fishing Mr. Pearce remained ashore, and he soon found himself at the end of his resources.

That little place on the coast of Somerset—with its clean whitewashed cottages against woodland steeps of mountain-ash, and spreading hazels, and delicate birches, that rise towards the spacious moorland where ridge on ridge is carpeted with purple heather, the quiet out-of-the-world place

with the rich wealth of geraniums against the whitewashed cottages that was "a poem" to his friends—was to the man of the city and of streets—the thorough Londoner—"very dull."

No one could have chosen better holiday companions than he. No one could be dull in their company. But when they two were away fishing—as gay as two boys on holiday—John Pearce could not feel the charms of the Weir; he could not explore the hills and the moors beyond alone.

But he talked to the fishermen. They interested him more than the Weir. He met one who had just returned from London. To his neighbours he had become a traveller. "He was a regular hero. It was just as if he had been to the wilds of Africa or to the South Seas. I asked him how he liked London. He told me: 'I got to the station all right. There were plenty o' people about, but not one o' 'em said "Marnin', Bill."' "

So was judgment passed upon Londoners by the Somerset fisherman. Not one in the crowd had said "Marnin', Bill." They were an unfriendly lot.

Perhaps William Pollard modified his judgment

later, for he came to know the three visitors to the quiet Weir, and the one who was a minister showed to him the wonder of a larger life, as William Carter had years before shown it to John Pearce.

He had other holidays with Archibald Brown. It was with him that he first went to the south of France. They were good company for each other, and for other people too.

II

Many times he went to Switzerland, but no other time was quite like the first, when, face to face with the snow-covered peaks, he sat silent, wanting no one to speak to him. "I always envy the chap that's going for the first time," he said, recalling that thrilling experience.

He was very fond of a chalet on the Lake of Lucerne. Once when he was there he met a young man who was afterwards to become Lord Chancellor, the son of Sir Quentin Hogg. Douglas Hogg was friendly to the tall Englishman who was a stranger, and showed himself an interesting guide. He took him round the town.

They saw the emerald-green torrent of the Reuss issuing from the lake. They crossed the

bridge decorated with paintings from the lives of the saints, and the bridge with the paintings of the "Dance of Death." They rambled through the older part of the town, through crooked streets with their quaint sixteenth- and seventeenth-century houses. They looked on Rigi and Pilatus. Douglas Hogg told his companion many interesting things that were not to be found in the guide-books.

Later John Pearce himself acted as guide to others who were strangers. He remembered the things he had heard and seen, and—useful art in a guide—he learned, he said, "the art of evading anything I didn't know."

Once at the Bear Hotel at Grindelwald he met Dr. Joseph Parker and Dr. Lunn. They invited him to accompany them on an excursion to the Glaciers. The man who would "never be a mountaineer" told the story with a laugh at himself.

He remembered little of the walk through the narrow road and footpaths, across the iron bridge that spans a branch of the Lütschine, the climb by the steep rocky slopes, or the grand view from the Banisegg; but he remembered the preacher with the "big lion-like head, wearing a tourist suit many sizes too big"; he remembered the

little oak resting-places on the journey and the goat's milk provided; he remembered Christen, the expert guide, and Dr. Lunn and his interesting descriptions of the movements of glaciers—of the deep crevasses, often hidden by treacherous snows.

Glaciers had been unknown to John Pearce, and, while they interested him, he found them rather frightening.

Then Christen told the story—told many times since—of the young English bridegroom, on his honeymoon in the Alps, who one day slipped into a crevasse and disappeared. He told of the fruitless search of the eighteen-year-old bride; her hopeless waiting for the recovery of at least the body of her bridegroom. He told of the return of the bridegroom to the bride forty-five years afterwards, when the glacier gave up the perfectly preserved body of the young man of twenty-one to the aged woman of sixty-three.

John Pearce listened to that story. The party reached the edge of the glacier, where roping was necessary. "I thought of my wife and my big family," he afterwards confessed with a broad grin. "When they began to lash themselves together I turned tail. That was the end of my mountaineering."

III

He saw and treasured, too, many pictures of Italy that may have gained an added beauty against the vivid memories of Stratford Place and the builder's yard in Hoxton. He often brings out the pictures and looks at them. They do not grow dull.

A journey from Modane on the Italian frontier, passing through the midst of the Apennines in a snowstorm which gave the scene an added grandeur.—The sun shining on the snow-covered range of mountains as they journeyed from Turin: mountains that seemed to excel the mountains of Switzerland.—Sunset over the Mediterranean Sea and a sky of vivid reds such as Italian paintings sometimes show.—A visit to Capri, with its orchards of lemon and orange-trees, and the most famous cavern on its rocky shores, the cavern formed by breakers before the dawn of history. He sees in that picture of the Blue Grotto "blue water, blue rocks, blue everything."

Then he brings out the little human pictures that appealed to him: The women in the fields, more busy than the men, working without shoes and stockings, like the Irish Biddy of his earlier days. The women doing their washing in the

rivers. The ploughs in the fields worked by a single hand. The women toiling up the hills with big bundles of produce. He has so many pictures of beauty, so many pictures of little human things.

"Rome," he said, "impressed me most as a religious man." He looks at some of its scenes:

A house in a poor quarter of the city; down six stone steps and across a tiled floor: the room where the Apostle Paul lived.—The Appian Way and the gate by which Paul came into Rome. A walk over the same stones that the Apostle walked over on his way to the Eternal City.—The oldest Christian catacombs, where Peter and Paul were caught. St. Peter's on Palm Sunday; the kneeling peasants and the blessing of the palms; the peasants before the image of St. Peter kneeling to kiss the saint's toe.

"When I was in Rome," he said, "I got careful in my speech and action. I was a staunch Protestant and I didn't want to offend the Catholics. Coming from St. Peter's, I was sitting in the middle of a fly. We came to the statue of Garibaldi. The Italians can carve! As a young chap I had been interested in Garibaldi's fight for freedom. I had watched how the struggle went on. I worried when he was wounded. He was a hero to me.

When I saw his statue in Rome I took off my hat, and said, 'He is very good.' Then I wondered if I'd done wrong. But the drivers were very pleased. They honoured Garibaldi too.

"When I used to go to the Victoria Hall, I always noticed the Garibaldi Arms at the corner of Stamford Street. Once the name was painted out and it worried me. But it was put in again."

He has pictures of Venice, too. One of St. Mark's, "the oldest building I went into," and a party of German pilgrims there, some of them very poor, on their way to Rome to pay money to the Pope.

The house of the Merchant of Venice and the house of Shylock the Jew. These brought back memories of the Britannia. That Hoxton theatre did not offer only such plays as *Sweeney Todd* and *Maria Marten*. "We had some treats there. Sometimes we had Shakespeare." So it was at the "Old Brit" that John Pearce learned of the Merchant of Venice and the Jew.

It is not the rich architecture of the Doge's Palace, the gorgeous painting of the Audience Chamber, nor the grandeur of the State apartments that he remembers, but the little recess in a large room where victims were tortured; the dungeon where political offenders were imprisoned

and put to death; the Bridge of Sighs connecting the palace with the prison.

"The awful punishments suffered in the dungeon!" he says with a shudder. "They were awfully cruel. . . . Men suffered for their faith in those days."

IV

In 1906 he saw what comparatively few Englishmen have seen—such conditions as those which accompanied the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

He was travelling with Mrs. Pearce and his friend Mr. T. A. Curtis—the secretary of the Church at Chatsworth Road—and a party of tourists. On that holiday Mrs. Pearce mothered the big family and made tea for them on the trains.

They left Rome to reach Naples on Good Friday, April 13th. When they were about sixty miles from their destination they found themselves in an atmosphere resembling a London fog. The air was filled with dust. Through the dust clouds the districts they passed "presented a miserable appearance." The ground was covered two or three inches deep with a light ash, like emery.

The dust continued to fall so thickly that the sky and the sun were hidden. The thoroughfares were blocked. The train slackened its speed. Darkness dropped. There was a smell of burning. The ash penetrated the carriages and covered the travellers.

Then they emerged into brilliant sunshine and saw the blue waters of the Bay.

Vesuvius was in eruption. That disaster of 1906 was described as even greater than that which destroyed the famous cities of the ancient world.

When the tourists reached Naples the volcano had spent its first fury. A cloud of ashes still surmounted the crater, but it was diminishing. They did not see the flame that shot up two thousand feet—as described by an observer—when red-hot stones were flung far and wide; or the "fountain of fire" that "kept an average height of five hundred feet, with thunder and flashes of lightning," and displayed "huge smoky forms, giants and demons of gigantic size." The streets of Naples were covered deeply in ash, but the sun was shining, the darkness was past.

The next morning they talked with English visitors who had been in Naples throughout the disaster. There had been panic—inevitably. People in England imagined that the tragedy had been

exaggerated, but those who were in its neighbourhood thought that hardly possible.

On one side of the mountain there had been terrible darkness, but on the Pompeii side, where the red-hot lava travelled down the mountain-side at the rate of sixty-six feet a minute, carrying destruction wherever it went, the air was fine and bright.

The noise of the boiling lava from the crater, of its progress as it broke into millions of hard fragments, was terrific, and it was joined with the dull roar of the glowing ashes and burning stones tossed from the crater's mouth.

Over a hundred thousand refugees had come in to Naples, they were told, from the neighbouring towns and villages.

John Pearce and his friend went together to see the devastated areas. They visited Torre Annunziata—a sombre city shrouded in yellowish-grey, the trees in their spring-time wearing a robe of dust, under a pall of purple cloud. They saw the procession of priest and people, and the image of the Virgin carried through the city that the city might be saved. A rushing stream of hot lava came towards the city, carrying everything before it; then, reaching a house near the cemetery, its course was diverted. The people gave

thanks for the working of a miracle. A statue of the Madonna was carried also through the streets of Naples to turn aside the threatened destruction.

They visited the village of San Giuseppe, where they found "a scene of the greatest misery and destruction." On the previous Sunday, being Palm Sunday, the church of Sant Antonio had been visited by an unusually large number of people. While the worshippers were still in the building, a mass of ashes and lapilli crushed in the roof, killing over two hundred people. When John Pearce and his friend reached the spot, the walls of the church were still standing. Soldiers were busy among the wreckage. The roads were blotted out, buried beneath five and six feet of pumice. The land was grey and desolate.

Many of the poorer people refused to leave the district that had been their home, and were living in all kinds of improvised shelters. The Government had provided little tents, that John Pearce described as "like dog-kennels. The women crept into them. They wouldn't go away. We visited the hospital and saw some who had been rescued. There was one old woman there who was a hundred and four (she had had her leg crushed), and there was a young woman, sitting up, whose

baby had been born the day before in one of those little kennels."

They tramped over the lava which had poured through the streets and had set like rough asphalt. It was still hot and sending out a sulphurous smoke. It remained hot for days. Their shoes were burned on their feet as they stood looking into a bedroom on what had been the second floor of a house that had become a ruin.

They could do nothing to help the homeless ones except contribute among themselves a sum of money, which they handed over to the chief of the police to distribute.

That visit to Naples and the district around Vesuvius was an unforgettable one. He reached Naples in time to see Vesuvius, which had not been visible since the eruption. He was with the first foreign party to visit San Giuseppe. On the night after their visit large quantities of ashes fell once more, and the district was closed and guarded by the soldiers.

In his reminiscences of those eventful days a very human touch of the "Old Adam" peeps out as John Pearce tells of the rival caterer who reached Naples just too late.

"I did him again that time," he says with a twinkle. "He drove up the next day, with his

carriage and horses, and wanted to go to San Giuseppe, but the military wouldn't let him through. He was too late."

Then he adds generously: "But he's a wonderful man."

CHAPTER XVIII

EIGHTY—NOT OUT

"CHOP your own wood and it will warm you twice," says the proverb. All his life John Pearce had done his own work, and at eighty he chopped wood as a hobby, "to absorb some of his surplus energy."

The generally accepted opinion is that at eighty a man should have retired; he should be taking his ease; he should be criticizing the young men; he should be talking of the good old days that are always gone. But John Pearce had done none of these things. At eighty he still loved life, still loved work. He had not learned to sit still, or to be happy as a mere looker-on.

At eighty he still went daily to the City, but now once more there was a home for him at the end of his day. After two years of loneliness, with the added burdens of war-time catering, he married a lady who had been a friend of his family for many years—married with as surprising suddenness as he had married nearly fifty years

before, to find unforeseen happiness in the years in which he retained the mental alertness of the man in middle life, and grew old so slowly.

The busy life of London had always an irresistible charm for him. He found it "difficult to take things easy." He was still the active head of the well-known chain of London Restaurants—over fifty in number. He was probably better known personally to his thousands of customers than any other caterer, for in addition to attending regularly the office in Farringdon Road, he was in the habit of visiting one or more of the houses when luncheons or dinners were being served. He was known to many of his customers as "Sir John," or "Old John," and he took the familiarity as a token of affection.

Sometimes his presence enlivened the dull shareholders' meetings which he attended regularly —as it had once enlivened a dull Royal Commission. To celebrate his coming-of-age as chairman of the J.P. Restaurant Company, the usual proceedings were interrupted by the presentation of a gold watch, accompanying the gift that pleased him best—the endowment of a cot in Hackney Children's Hospital in his name. That shareholders' meeting was not prosaic.

He had made fortunes, for himself and others;

but a standard had been set before him many years before—by the mother who was honest and true, fearing a God that she could not love—and John Pearce had laid the foundations and carried out the plans of his life-work with the simple faith that: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

And the building was a success.

Some time before he ceased to take a leading part in the business he introduced a profit-sharing scheme for customers. The new books of postage-stamps gave him the idea. Why not have stamps for payment at his shops, giving ten per cent. profit to the purchasers? The scheme would ensure regular customers, and the customers would have some share in the profits of the company.

He had books printed with special stamps of the value of a shilling, sixpence, and threepence—printed by the firm that printed the books of postage-stamps. There were fifty-three restaurants at which they could be used. The idea proved to be popular. Thousands of the books were sold. But later those who followed John Pearce did not think as he did of "profit-sharing," and the scheme was discontinued.

In his business a farthing profit was made on every shilling taken. In wages thirty-six per cent.

of the receipts went to the staff. In one way and another—according to his careful reckoning—labour obtained seventeen times as much as the shareholder received in dividend.

During the war years, during the General Strike and the falling off in trade, the business still made big profits—because the man at the head of it was never an absentee.

The nature of the business inevitably changed after the war. Although he still catered for the working man it was impossible to carry on the working-class trade to the same extent, with the enormous taxation and the high rents and rates. The need also lessened as travelling became easier and men could spend more time in their homes. Where before the war they would have taken three meals in a restaurant, they now took only one.

The subject of leasehold reform affected him very closely. He was a member of the Land and Nation League and the Town Tenants' League, and in 1926 he was elected Vice-President of the Leasehold Reform Association. He took part in the fight for the removal of the injustices and anachronisms of the leasehold system under which he and multitudes of tenants suffered. Many of the intricacies of the law, he confessed, were beyond

him. "There's such a lot of rigmarole with these things that you'd have to be a lifetime in Parliament before you could understand." He was one of a deputation of four to the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks. He circulated a pamphlet in which he wrote:

"In my opinion, the value of land in cities and towns is created by thrifty and enterprising traders. Without their energy and investment of capital the land would be comparatively valueless, but the big premiums or excessive rent demanded for renewal of leases amounts to the tenant having to purchase his own goodwill. . . .

"At Christmas 1905 I took premises on a twenty-one years' repairing lease. The place was empty, and there was no existing goodwill. The venture was a speculative one, in which I risked my capital. When near the end of the lease, I approached my landlord for a renewal, and was informed that it had been sold, without my knowledge, to a competitor, who proved to be one of the most powerful, who has acted similarly towards me in other cases. On expiry of the lease I had the premises put into thorough repair at a cost of several hundred pounds, but in addition to having to close the shop and lose all my goodwill, and in

spite of all I had done, the new owners sent me a bill for £400 for dilapidations.

"Had I been a 'one-shop' man, this big bill, in addition to my loss of business and inability to secure suitable premises near in which to carry on, would have meant ruin. . . .

"I have particulars of many other leaseholders who have suffered as I have done in the above and other similar cases, but, in fairness, I must add that I have some very honourable and conscientious landlords and do business with straightforward estate agents. I do not want to rob landlords (I am one myself), but I *do* want the trader to share in the increased value of the property that his industry has created."

He also wrote to the local Press:

"The unfortunate leaseholder is in a sad plight. At the end of his lease he suffers the total loss of the property he has built or bought, as well as the value of all alterations and improvements he has carried out on it. That is in his bond. In addition, however, he is called upon to foot the bill for dilapidations to make the century-old premises, which are no longer his, as good as new; and this he has to do even when the ground landlord intends forthwith to demolish the structure and rebuild on the site. If they are business

premises, he may pay all his dues, only to be turned out without option of renewal, and see the re-conditioned property with all the goodwill he has created there pass to a trade competitor."

The daily papers published articles with big headlines: "Squeezed Out! Well-known Caterer Hit by Lease Injustice. Losing Four Shops. Twenty Years' Effort Wasted."

One of the dailies said: "Mr. Pearce is not a poor man, it may be presumed, since he controls several companies that own some sixty restaurants of various grades; but he has a pride in maintaining the reputation that he has built up, and he naturally resents the loss of any shop that his enterprise has made a successful trading centre."

He addressed a letter to the Prime Minister, in which he said:

". . . I respectfully submit that [the subject of Leasehold Reform] should not be made a party question, as it is one very largely affecting all sections of the community in every part of the country and of every political opinion, for the onerous terms and conditions now imposed by lessors of business premises necessitate increased charges to the consumer, and, in many cases, the stifling of business enterprise."

The subject had been the cause of discussion

and agitation for years, but no Government had tackled it. It bristled with difficulties. But after constant agitation and hard work the Government recognized that there *was* a grievance, and while the Leasehold Reform Association was busy drafting a Bill, the Government stepped in with their proposals in the King's Speech. This effectually blocked the other Bill. The Landlord and Tenant Act was passed in 1927. It did not go far enough for John Pearce and his colleagues, but at least it established a principle and admitted a grievance.

In March of that year John Pearce retired from the position of chairman and managing director of the company, but still he retained the position of understudy. If one of his sons is ill or on holiday he is always ready to take his place. When the understudy is not needed he has time to potter about his home, learning some of the details of home-life that had before been a mystery to him; doing odd jobs of carpentering—mending the furniture and making comfortable things for the garden; entertaining the few or the many in his home and garden; helping lame dogs over many stiles; making his home the place of welcome for his numerous descendants. "A large family keeps one going," he says. "We are never isolated."

It is there that this practical idealist, who

started with a coster's barrow, and, later, fed over a hundred thousand people a day, entertains a bonnie great-granddaughter who, confident in her vast inexperience, instructs him in the way that he should go.

CHAPTER XIX

LONDON THEN AND NOW

"ALAS, alas! the times are not what they were," lamented the old men in far-off Babylon. "Thank God the times are not what they were!" says John Pearce, looking back with clear eyes over nearly eighty years.

"London as I first remember it was a dreadful place compared with the London of to-day. If only I had a literary mind I should like to write of the things I have seen. I should like to tell people about the glorious improvements. I should like to make them understand some of the wonders of education."

He cannot write of these things, but he has talked of them many times as we have sat by the fire in the large bright drawing-room that the John Pearce of the coster's barrow could never have imagined, with the wife who has helped to make the after-the-war home such a hospitable place.

"We never thought of free education when I was

a kid. Your parents bought your education as they bought your boots or your bread—when they could afford it. That wasn't often for me. My mother slaved for her nine shillings a week. Sometimes she hadn't fourpence to spare.

"Any man with nothing better to do could be a schoolmaster. Any woman who could spell could open a school. To-day, when I go to the big Council building that has taken the place of my dingy old school, I am filled with thankfulness that the lot of the children is so much better than mine was. . . .

"When I was a boy Poor Law children were as much the property of the masters to whom they were given as were their dogs. I often heard Charles Dickens give his Penny Readings. I know the conditions he described. His pictures are not exaggerated. The worst phase of the child apprenticeship system was past, but the system still existed. If a chimney-sweep or a travelling tinker wanted a boy, the Poor Law Guardians were glad to oblige him. I often think that but for my mother's heroic independence and high character I and my brothers might have been among them. I bless the name of Lord Shaftesbury, who made an end of child slavery in England."

In so many directions John Pearce finds

"a glorious improvement." He loves to talk of them.

"Have I told you what the streets were like seventy years ago? You can hardly imagine. They were generally so muddy that nearly every woman —at any rate in such districts as ours—wore a pair of pattens. The roads had to be scraped to clear up the mud. Men with spoon-like shovels scooped it up into slop-carts, and the people and the shop-fronts got splashed.

"There were no water-carts in the streets. When it was dry weather the dust flew in clouds. People suffered from what was called 'Piccadilly throat' from the impurities in the air.

"It was quite a common sight to see a dead dog or a dead cat lying in the streets for days. There was not much *main* drainage. There were no public baths.

"The water supply was very irregular in those days. Generally it was turned on for half an hour every day; sometimes we could get more on Sundays. Turncocks had stations in the different districts. They went round taking out the plugs in the roads. You had to get the water while it was on. The river water was very offensive. Some parts of London depended on well-water and rain-water."

He likes to recall the improvement in the care of the sick.

"A Medical or Health Authority didn't exist when I was a boy. Infectious diseases, even smallpox, were left to be dealt with by the people. There was no notification and no isolation. No disinfectant was used, except a little chloride of lime occasionally.

"I was sent out of hospital with scarlet fever—sent back to our one room. I was put in bed with one of my brothers. He kicked, so my mother turned him out and put the other in. They both took the fever. We were nursed without any advice. It was degrading to have the parish doctor.

"When I was a young man things weren't any better. When we were moving into a new place some of the children had fever. I wrapped them in a blanket and carried them to the new house. The place we left wasn't disinfected. No one thought of it.

"The treatment of the sick was very different before the days of anæsthetics. My father had an accident, and he had a piece of bone taken from his arm without an anæsthetic. The shock and his screams robbed him of his voice. He couldn't speak clearly afterwards. His nerves never re-

covered. He was never able to earn his living again."

John Pearce sees again the small home off Ivy Street: the three boys lying on the rough improvised bed; the sick man lying in a bed in another corner, and the tall bent woman working by the light of a penny dip. He does not want to forget. His memories give him understanding and sympathy.

"For lighting, at least in the homes of the poor, they used principally candles. My mother used a penny dip. If you were *very* poor you used a ha'penny rush-light. It gave less light than a night-light gives. When we had the fever my mother kept one burning all night. It would last the night and it didn't need any snuffing. It was about a foot for a ha'penny.

"If some of these modern big stores, that anyone can walk round, had come into existence when I was a kid, it would have been an event—just the shop and the lighting!"

He looks back to the London streets of sixty-five years ago. He sees "more open vice then. Some of the streets were crowded all night. The profligacy of London, East and West, was worse than it is to-day. Gambling was worse. Gambling-houses were open all night. Drinking

was worse. At one time men were driven to drink by the dirty coffee-houses and the ever-open gin-shops. The licensed working man's club is the greatest peril nowadays; it's not obliged to close as the public-house is.

"You never find very much evil without drink about. Seventy years ago the publicans supplied most of the entertainments—as well as most of the newspapers. They had 'sing-songs' in their back-yards. The music-halls grew from these. In the early ones it was the customers who used to sing; later on they had professionals. The 'sing-songs' were in the back-yard behind the public-house, where they put up a platform and some seats. Now things are done in better style.

"The Gardens were always attached to drinking places—Vauxhall Gardens, Cremorne, at Fulham, the Surrey Gardens, and the Eagle in City Road. They were open-air places with a hall attached—and drinking-bars.

"I knew whole families that went wrong through the dancing at the Eagle. The vice and immorality there was something appalling. That's what makes me so against dancing. I knew such terrible things that went on there. Even if I could tell you, you couldn't put them in print.

"It's a wonderful thing—the drink," he said

thoughtfully, when he had been speaking of influential men he had known. "People are nice and kind to you—would do anything for you—but if they are in any way connected with 'the trade,' touch their interests and they change at once. They turn bitter, and are ready to use their money to any extent to fight you. . . . Strange thing—the drink.

"Many publicans used to have a 'skittles alley,' and men who had been drinking too much to go to work on Monday spent the time bowling down skittles in a long shed."

He looks back over the century that abolished child slavery; abolished flogging in the Army and Navy; abolished public executions and floggings and imprisonment for debt; the century that gave public baths and model lodging-houses, free education, free libraries, and cheap papers; that gave the right to hold public meetings and the right to freedom of speech. He goes over the developments he has watched: photography; the telegraph, telephone, wireless; steam trains, electric trains, steamships, motor-cars, aeroplanes; better holidays, more wholesome amusements.

"I thank God I have lived to see London as it is to-day," he says.

"How things have moved! Did I tell you about

our fire-engine? It was a primitive affair. There was a parish engine in every district. In Hoxton it was kept in a lock-up shed, with a notice on the door that the key was at Nelson Place, City Road. When there was a fire, boys would run for the key. The man who kept it was lame. He'd give it to the boys and follow when he could. Oh, we had no horse for the Hoxton engine—it was drawn by hand. The boys got it out before the man arrived. When the fire was out, he'd say, 'Take it home, boys,' and leave it to them.

"There was a better engine in City Road—to be drawn by a horse. It was kept near a cab-stand. When there was a fire someone got the engine out and someone else took one of the cab-horses. . . . I suppose that now we have the finest fire brigade in the world.

"So many things look primitive when you look back on them. Those slow four-wheeled cabs, called 'growlers'; the two-horse buses that ran every half-hour; the trains of which the company advertised covered carriages for excursions—for a treat."

The talk strays back to the exciting days at the Britannia Theatre.

"*Sweeney Tod* and *Maria Marten* are gruesome

horrors," he is reminded. "You'd hate them if you saw them now."

He grinned all over his wrinkled face. "We had to have things hot in Hoxton. We'd paid threepence, and if we didn't get a good murder we felt we'd been done. . . .

"It's difficult for you to realize how little recreation people had. There was scarcely any that wasn't associated with drink. Many of the people couldn't read. Even when I was employing my own men it was quite usual for a carter to put a cross on a receipt in place of his name because he couldn't write. Dickens's readings were always popular—I don't know whether people would go to such things now—they were simple affairs in small church halls. Perhaps they'd go still—if it was Dickens. . . .

"Miss Emma Cons did a great deal towards providing decent amusements for the working classes," he said thoughtfully. "She was so practical. There was no cant about her. She was a good Christian woman—very outspoken. I loved her."

He chuckled as he added: "She had a splendid knack of getting all she wanted from any sort of authority.

"She was the first woman to sit on the London

County Council. She did wonders at the Old Vic. It had degenerated into a deplorable place. The lowest kind of plays were given there. She got an interest in the building and reclaimed it. For many years I had the coffee-tavern and the temperance bars in the theatre."

We talked of the animals. "Things have improved for them as well as for people?"

"Yes," he agreed. "Their Society has done wonders for them. The loads that were put on the horses were terrible. If you dared to say anything you were likely to get knocked about yourself. I have been threatened when I tried to interfere. . . .

"Many of the amusements in such districts as Hoxton were simply cruel—dog fights and cock fights. A common Sunday afternoon's amusement was to tie two cats together by their tails and fling them over a line. In their agony the poor creatures would tear one another to pieces. . . .

"For men and for animals this country has become a better place. The old Convict Ships were places of cruelty. You know they used to transport prisoners to Nova Scotia and other Convict Settlements.—Lots of good men are descended from criminals.—Some of those early transport ships were fitted with cells, and men

were imprisoned in them out at sea for safety. When more prisons were built those ships were sunk. But one was hauled up, fitted up with wax figures, and for years taken round the coast on show."

He has taken great interest in the better treatment of prisoners, and, through one of his sons, keeps in touch with the Society that works to give a man a second, third, or even tenth chance, which in the good old days a one-time prisoner never had.

He told of a man who had spent forty-five years of his life in jail because, having been sent there as a boy, he could not escape the mesh. A child of the streets, growing up in Seven Dials, he one day "pinched somefin' and got copt." When he came out he vowed never to go back. For years each time he came out he vowed never to go back. But he had no honest way of earning a living. At last he came to look upon his prison life as his business. The times between were his holidays.

After forty-five years Mr. Pearce's son found him. He got him a job that has kept him out of prison and amongst honest men.

John Pearce is no politician, but on some subjects of public interest he has very strong opinions; one of these is the National Health Insurance.

His company had a Health Insurance of its own, and he compares its returns with the returns of the Government Insurance.

In 1920 a sick fund was started, to which employees paid fourpence—or eightpence for two shares. In 1921 the company paid £2,820, while the staff contributed £2,400. Although there were several deaths and a good deal of sickness during the year, the share-out at Christmas gave a return of two-thirds of the money that had been put in. He makes a comparison.

"The National Health Insurance seems to give so little in return. Think what a commercial firm could do with that amount of money!"

He is even more emphatically opposed to the "dole." "Two of the most adverse influences to-day are—the dole and bad housing," he says. "If there had been a dole sixty years ago I should never have got on. It is so degrading to take money continually without working for it. It's degrading to give money to able-bodied men when they won't work.

"There are two things I'd like to see—better houses and able-bodied men to work for all they get.

"We see much of the effects of the dole in our work. Two youths were offered twenty-two

shillings a week and their food to go into the kitchen and help the cook. They wouldn't take it. They said: 'It's not good enough. We can get eighteen shillings without working.'"

Then he gets on to the subject of trade unions.

"If you knew the tyranny of the trade unions as I know it," he said, "your blood would boil. . . . You mustn't think I'm against them. Properly worked they're all right. They've been good in getting better conditions and better prices for labour in every form. It's the tyrannical side of the unions, in holding up for small things, that makes me mad. I think they're beginning to see now that tyranny isn't for their good—that they're driving trade out of the country.

"I like the working man. The average working man's not a bad sort. He wouldn't make the trouble. It's often the leaders, who have to make trouble to warrant their existence.

"They've done good sometimes. Think of the Dock Strike. The dockers were striking only for sixpence an hour. I could get pretty hot about that if I might. The trouble is you mustn't say what you know.

"If I'd been a docker I'd have been one of the ringleaders. It's all very well to be good when you've got plenty——"

A silence is filled with thoughts of those who have not.

For many things in the conditions of the present day he is thankful, but when he looks back to his first home—his early courtship—he feels there is something that modern youth misses.

Do they know such dreams as his, those young men who must buy a car before they can make a home? "If I could just get half-a-dozen Windsor chairs and a bit of coconut matting, and a few other sticks of furniture, and get that girl to marry me and share my room, I'd be in heaven."

Do they know the thrill of such mad extravagance as made the young bridegroom spend nearly the whole of his week's earnings on a pink and white and gold tea-service for his young bride?

"I'm sorry for the boy who goes courting nowadays," he says. "He doesn't know what to give a girl. She has everything. . . .

"The pleasure of getting," he muses aloud. "The joy of getting on. It's more blessed to be born poor than rich. We can't give our children that. They start with too much."

CHAPTER XX

THE COLOPHON

It was a midsummer afternoon—a real summer day between days that just pretended. I was alone in the Dulwich garden of the man who had been born in a narrow alley where green things did not grow. Ivy Street seemed very far away—and yet near, as the blossom is near to the seed.

The garden was secluded by tall trees. Beyond the sunny lawn were apple-trees laden with fruit. Bunches of grapes were ripening in the greenhouse; many of them, I knew, would be sent to the sick in hospitals. The flowers proclaimed that it was June—and England. Thrush and blackbird were hunting on the lawn. The wind played softly among the trees; birds chirruped low in the branches.

A child's ball was lying on the grass. "I love the kiddies more as I grow older," he had said, I remembered. At the edge of the grass was a croquet-box. Near by was a miniature toboggan—somebody's toy; and through a bank of shrubs

I caught the glint of a swing. Somebody was playing.

I thought of John Pearce as I lay in his deck-chair under his big sunshade. He had asked me to tell his story. Many times he had said: "I'd like to encourage some young fellow who felt he hadn't a chance," as he had encouraged many in Chicago, at the command of D. L. Moody. I had told him that I had tried to find someone who did not think well of him—to get the other side of the picture—and I had not been successful. His broad smile was delighted.

"I can find you the man," he said. "One who owes me two hundred pounds. He doesn't think well of me."

I did not meet that man, but I gleaned an ear of worldly wisdom. John Pearce told me:

"Most of my enemies are people I have helped with money. Now I lend nothing. If I lend, I lose their friendship; if I give, I keep it. If I lived for another hundred years I wouldn't lend a penny. I'd give." Then he chuckled. "Men hate to be reminded of a loan. A little while ago a man came to borrow, and I reminded him he already owed me a considerable sum. He looked quite surprised; he had owed it so long. 'Oh, you mean that dead debt,' he suggested when he remembered."

"I have seen many men who have arrived," he said one day; "but I've never seen one that seemed as good a Christian as he did in the plodding stage." Then he smiled as he recalled an alderman-sportsman—a Christian gentleman—of whom he thinks very highly. "Well, perhaps there are a few exceptions," he conceded.

Presently he returned. We had tea in the garden, and then once more we talked.

He had dwelt so often on the "glorious improvements" he has seen; there is one thing—needing drastic remedies—over which he still grows hot.

"If only I had the ability and the strength," he cried, as we sat in that peaceful garden, "I'd work for housing reform. Everything is secondary to housing. If only I could fight for that. . . .

"It's the only thing we're really behind in. It's just as important to give people decent houses as to educate them. We're rather overdoing the educating now. If you want a good nation you must provide decent houses. You can't expect good morals from bad conditions. I wish someone would take the question up and carry the thing through. If there were a revolution the authorities would do something!" he said with unwonted fierceness.

"A man pays a high rent and goes home to his wife and three or four children in one room. Fancy illness there!

"I know a very rich man who makes money by letting out a whole house in single rooms to people who can't get anything better.

"When that flood came, and those poor people were drowned, I thought it'd alter things. But we simmered down again. That tragedy ought not to have been. . . .

"I knew a man who was in Wormwood Scrubs. He had been earning fifty shillings a week. He had a wife and two children, and they were expecting another one. They lived in one room and had to pay eighteen shillings a week rent. It was winter-time. In the cold weather he stole some coal from a railway siding. It's all very well to say that man was wrong to steal coal. If I'd been the coal-merchant I should have thought he ought to be stopped, but if I'd been in the man's place I might have done as he did.

"My son came to know him while he was in prison. I got one of my girls to visit the home. She took parcels of groceries and other things to the wife. Her baby was born while her husband was still in Wormwood Scrubs.

"She was getting twenty or twenty-five shillings

a week from the parish, and was still paying eighteen in rent. I advised her to offer the landlord ten and say she couldn't pay more. As I was at the back of her she ventured. She offered the rascal ten shillings. He ramped and he raved; he threatened to turn her out. If he'd gone to the court I'd have had him, but he knew better. . . . That man was making £8 a week out of that house!

"When her husband came out he was taught motoring and offered a job at £3 5s. a week. He did well."

We sat silent for some time—the only sound the wind in the trees, our only companions a thrush and his mate together. Then quietly we touched on the things of the depths and the heights.

"It's difficult to talk about one's religion without sounding priggish," he said slowly. "But if it hadn't been for religion I should have gone to the bad again and again. Only God and I know what temptations I've come through.

"My Church, my home, and my mother—if it hadn't been for these I should have been as bad as any man. With our earlier associations it would have been easier to go wrong than to go right.

"I've never been able to talk much, but religion's been the real thing with me. It's never been something to suit someone else.

"There were many times when I got home on Saturday nights weary and sick of life, wishing there might be no beginning again. But I had my home, and the power that I found in my Church and worship. On Mondays I went back as strong as ever.

"I couldn't have got that from the club or the theatre.

"I was always blessed in my ministers. They were *men* — manly Christians — never namby-pamby."

Then once more he thought of those less fortunate than himself.

"It's wonderful how good boys are—and girls too, those who have little encouragement in their homes and their lives. I don't wonder at people going wrong. When I know the homes, I'm surprised that so many go right.

"I haven't had an easy life, but there are so many troubles I haven't had. Fancy a man going home to a woman drunk——

"My Church and my family have been my all, beyond my work. I've needed nothing outside."

The shadows had crept across the lawn, stealing away its light. The sun was setting behind the trees, leaving a quiet sky.

"I've so much to be grateful and thankful for," said John Pearce, his face towards the sunset.

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